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TWELVE

SERMONS

Preach'd at the

LECTURE

FOUNDED

By ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

CONCERNING

The Possibility, Necessity and Certainty of Divine Revelation.

The Second Edition.

To which are added,

Three SERMONS,

I. Of Scripture being a Rule: Preach'd at a Meeting of the CLERGY in *Lewes* in *Sussex*. Not before Printed.

II. Of Justification, reprinted: Preach'd at a Meeting of the CLERGY at *Chichester*.

III. Of a Propitiation: Preach'd before the Late KING in the *Passion-Week*. Not before Printed.

By the Right Reverend,
JOHN Lord Bishop of *CHICHESTER*.

LONDON, Printed for *R. Chiswell*, *J. Nicholson*, *J. Sprint*, *A. Bell*, and *B. Lintott*. 1708.

SERMONS

Preached at the

LECTURE

In LONDON

By Robert Bovet, Esq;

CONTAINING

The Fatality, Necessity, and Certainty of Divine Revelation.

The Second Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for Robert Clavel, at the Peacock in Fleet-street, and Henry Mortlock, at the Phœnix in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1698.

THE CONTENTS.

Sermon I. *The Possibility, Expediency and Necessity of Divine Revelation.* p. 1

II. *The Certainty of Divine Revelation.* p. 36

III. *The Characters of Divine Revelation.* p. 81

IV. *The Scriptures have upon them the Characters of Divine Revelation.* p. 111

V. *The Argument prosecuted.* p. 141

VI. *The same Argument.* p. 174

VII. *The several Ways of Revelation.* p. 209

VIII. *The Perfection of Evangelical Revelation.* p. 243

IX. *The same Argument prosecuted.* p. 273

X. *The Scripture Rule of Faith.* p. 307

XI. *The Perspicuity of Scripture, and Rules for the Interpretation of it.* p. 336

XII. *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* p. 368

Ser-

The Contents.

Sermon I. *Scripture a Rule for our Direction in Matters of Doctrine, Worship, Conscience, Comfort and Salvation.* p. 401
II. *Of Justification by Faith.* p. 433
III. *Christ a Sacrifice and Propitiation.* p. 465

ERRATA.

PAg. 59. l. 13. d. *is*, p. 107. l. 24. after *Times* d., p. 117. l. 28. after *Achilles* d., p. 125. l. 27. after *all* place, and after *this* d., p. 147. Marg. r. 2 *Pet.* 2. 1. p. 154. l. 10. r. *Being is to a depraved being what*— p. 165. l. 27. r. *as well as.* p. 173. l. 4. r. *Act.* 13. 1. p. 192. r. 2 *Cor.* 1. 13. p. 261. l. 16. d. *which was.* p. 315. l. 9. after *is* d., p. 415. l. 7. r. *veram.* p. 419. l. 8. r. *Cana.* p. 427. l. 2. r. *opposing.* p. 428. after *Lusts* r. *in.* p. 428. l. *ult.* that *we.* p. 429. l. 30. f. *Israel* r. *Truth.* p. 468. r. *Ezek.* 43. 22, 23. p. 469. l. 21. r. 5. 9. l. *ult.* r. *our.* p. 473. l. 7. d. *his.* p. 477. l. 17. d. *Mich. Matt.* p. 479. l. 25. r. *foreclosed.* p. 480. l. 28. after *reconciling* place, p. 481. l. 22. f. 12. r. 32. l. 25. *and that* Rom.

The Possibility, Expediency, and Necessity of Divine Revelation.

THE FIRST SERMON AT Mr. *Boyle*'s Lecture

Preach'd at

St. *Martins in the Fields*,

January 7. $169\frac{4}{5}$.

Heb. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.

THERE are Two Ways by which Mankind may attain to the Knowledge of Divine Things; namely, Natural or Supernatural.

Natural, is what we have ſpringing up with our Faculties, or what we attain by Natural Means, by Sight, Obſervation and Experience, by Tradition (which is the Hiſtory of others Knowledge and Experience); and laſtly, by Reaſon and Argument, deducing Effects from their proper Cauſes, or finding out the Cauſe by its Effects: As for Inſtance; Thus we come to the Knowledge of God by obſerving the Frame of the World, by

Sermon I.

the Series, Order, and Course of Things, which could never be without some Cause to produce them, and that Cause no less than One infinitely Powerful and Wise. Thus we argue, That there is a Soul in Man distinct from the Body, and surviving a Separation from it; forasmuch as there are such Operations as are not Competent to Matter; and that there is such a Desire of Immortality placed in Mankind, as would make the Flower and Choicest Part of the Visible Creation the most Miserable, if there was no Capacity in the Soul for such a State, or no such State for a Soul capable of it.

Such Inferences as these, are as natural to a Reasonable Mind, as those Observations are which we make from the Reports of Sense; and are therefore deservedly accounted Branches of Natural Religion.

Now this kind of Knowledge is more or less evident, is stronger or weaker, according to the Capacities and Dispositions of Mankind, and according to the Opportunities and Means they have of Information. And therefore a Philosopher that sets himself to

enquire

enquire into the Myſteries of Nature, and to obſerve the Curioſity, Order and Beauty of its Fabrick, may, in Reaſon, be ſuppos'd to be more confirm'd in the Belief of a God, and more diſpos'd to Serve and Adore him, than he that is ignorant; as he that underſtands Painting or Carving, can more obſerve and applaud the Ingenuity and Skill of the Artiſt, than he that is unacquainted with it.

But after all, ſo much is the Subject above our Reach, and ſo dark and intricate are all our Reaſonings upon it, that the Sageſt Philoſopher, in the Concluſion, is left as unſatisfied as the meaneſt Peaſant; and perhaps more unſatisfied with his Knowledge, and the deep and unfathomable Abyſs he ſees before him, than the other is with his Ignorance; ſo far making good what *Solomon* obſerves, *He that increaſeth Knowledge, increaſeth Sorrow.* Eccleſ. 1. 18.

So that there needs ſome brighter Light than that of Nature, to conduct us to Happineſs, and bring us to a compleat and entire Satisfaction; and that is a Supernatural Knowledge, a Knowledge that is not to be obtained

Sermon I.

by the ways aforesaid, by Enquiry and Observation, but by Inspiration and Revelation from Almighty God.

And this is the Subject of the Text. *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.*

In which Words we have,

1. A Description given of Revelation; 'tis *God's speaking to the Fathers*, &c. that is, it is God's delivering his Mind to Mankind by Persons chosen for that purpose, and peculiarly fitted for it by Inspiration. Such were the Prophets *in time past*, and the *Son* in the *last days*.

2. The Certainty of it; it is by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake, &c.* The Apostle takes this for granted, as having been sufficiently proved, and so needs no farther Confirmation. So it was in *times past*, when *God spake by the Prophets*; and so it was in *the last days* in the Revelation of the Gospel, *which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was*, saith our Apostle, *confirm'd unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness*

witneſs both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, Chap. 2, 3, 4. Sermon I.

And therefore as *Moſes* did not think himſelf obliged at the entrance into his Divine Work, to prove there is a God, and that God made the World, when there is ſuch an inbred Knowledge of a Deity implanted in Human Nature, and ſuch clear and undoubted Evidences of it throughout the Univerſe; but ſuppoſes and aſſerts it, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, &c. So after ſuch manifeſt Proofs of the Divine Authority of both the Prophetical and Evangelical Revelation, the Apoſtle would not ſo much as ſuppoſe any doubt in the Minds of thoſe he wrote to; but begins his Epiſtle with a certain Majeſty becoming an Inſpired Author, *God who at ſundry times*, &c.

3. The Order obſerved in delivering that Revelation, it was *at ſundry times, and in divers manners.*

At ſundry times, πολυμερῶς, or in *ſeveral parts*; which may refer either to the ſeveral Ages and Periods, *viz.* The Patriarchal, Moſaical, and Prophetical; or to the ſeveral Manifeſta-

Sermon I.

tions of Divine Revelation through those Ages and Periods; from the first Embrio of it in *Adam*, to the Close of it in *John* the Baptist; in whom the *time past* ended, and the *last days* began.

In divers manners, πολυτρόπως, according to the manifold Ways the Divine Spirit thought fit to communicate it self; whether by Illapses on the Persons inspired, or by Raptures, Visions, Voices, &c.

4. The Perfection and Completion of Divine Revelation; *God hath in these last days spoken by his Son.* So that what was gradually, and *at sundry times*, delivered *in time past to the Prophets*, was at once entirely and perfectly revealed by the Son of God, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things.*

Under the First of these I shall shew,

1. What we mean by Revelation.

2. The Possibility of God's revealing himself so to the Creature, that the Creature shall certainly and evidently know that it is God that speaketh.

3. The Expediency, Usefulness, and Necessity of a Revelation, with respect

ſpect to the Circumſtances Mankind are in. Sermon I.

Under the Second I ſhall ſhew,

1. That as it's poſſible for God to reveal himſelf, and expedient and neceſſary for Man that there ſhould be a Revelation; ſo God has actually thus revealed himſelf *at ſundry times, and in divers manners by the Prophets*, through the ſeveral Periods before ſpoken of, and *in the laſt days by his Son.*

2. I ſhall conſider the difference between a Real and Pretended Revelation, and how we may diſtinguiſh the True from the Falſe.

3. I ſhall ſhew, that the Scriptures of the Old and new Teſtament contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

Under the Third,

1. I ſhall conſider the ſeveral Ways by which God did reveal himſelf *in time paſt by the Prophets*, as by Illapſes, Inſpirations, Viſions, *&c.*

2. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the Difference between Divine Inſpirations, and Diabolical Illuſions, Natural Impreſſions, and Deluſory Imaginations.

Sermon I.

3. I shall consider the several Periods before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel; and the gradual Progress of Revelation from first to last, from the lower to the higher Degree, and the perpetual Respect one had to the other.

4. I shall consider why God did thus gradually, and at *sundry times*, proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind; and why he did not at the first communicate his Will to them as fully, and perfectly, as he did *in the last days by his Son.*

Under the Fourth,

I shall shew the Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation till the End cometh when our *Lord shall be revealed from Heaven*, and shall *deliver up the Kingdom to the Father.*

I have chosen thus at once to lay in order the Scheme of what I intend (God granting Life and Assistance) to pursue; that so the Dependance of one upon another, and the Assistance each Point gives to the other throughout the whole, might be the better observed.

1. Where

I. I am to begin with Revelation. Sermon I.

1. Where I am to conſider, What we mean by Revelation; which is nothing elſe in the firſt Notion, but the making known that which before was a Secret; ſo Things *Revealed* and *Secret* are oppoſed, *Deut.* 29. 29.

And when 'tis applied to a Religious Uſe, it's God's making known Himſelf, or his Will, to Mankind, over and above what he has made known by the Light of Nature and Reaſon.

Here we may obſerve, that there are Three Claſſes, into which whatever is the Object of our Knowledge may be reduced.

1. There are Things of pure and ſimple Nature, and knowable by the Light of it, without Revelation; of this kind, is the Knowledge of God by the Effects of a Divine Power and Wiſdom in the World (as has been ſhewed) of which the Apoſtle treats, *Rom.* 1. 20. *The inviſible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

2. There are Things of pure and ſimple Revelation, that are not know-

able

Sermon I.

able by the Light of Nature, but only by Revelation; and if not revealed, are never in this state (at least) to be known or found out by Mankind; of this sort is the Salvation of the World by Jesus Christ, which was not discoverable by Men or Angels; so the Apostle describes the Mystery of it. *Ephes.* 3. 9, 10. *Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,----- to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God.* So 1 *Pet.* 1. 12.

3. There are Things partly of Nature, and partly of Revelation, discoverable by the Light of Nature, but imperfectly, which we *see*, as it were, *through a Glass darkly*; and so they need Revelation to give them farther Proof and Evidence; of this the Apostle gives an Instance, 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. when he saith, our Saviour *brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel*, φωτίσαντος, making it as evident as the Light; whereas before it was rather wished for, than certain, as was the case of the Heathens; or much involv'd in Types, as among the

the *Jews*, *Hebr.* 9. 9, 24, *&c.* So that Revelation, of which ſort ſoever it is, is ſupernatural, and is only from God. Sermon I.

II. I ſhall ſhew the Poſſibility of a Revelation, and that Almighty God, if he ſo pleaſes, can ſo reveal himſelf to the Creature, that the Creature ſhall certainly and evidently know that the Revelation comes from God.

This one would reaſonably think ſhould need no Proof; and I ſhall therefore briefly touch upon it, that I may proceed to the Third, which I principally intend to make the Subject of this preſent Diſcourſe.

I ſay, it's poſſible for God to reveal himſelf to his Creatures.

(1.) Why ſhould this be queſtioned, when we every Day ſee Men mutually diſcover their Minds each to other; and by the Uſe and Direction of certain Organical Powers, ſignifie their Intentions, Deſires, and Commands? And why may not the Creator reveal his Will to the Creature, when one Creature thus can do it to another?

(2.) Why ſhould this be queſtioned, when we may by certain Evi-

dences

Sermon I.

dences know that a Person is sent from God? And then certainly the Person that produces such Evidences as are to the satisfaction of others, may himself be satisfied of the Truth of his own Commission, and the Certainty of a Divine Revelation. The former, that others may be satisfied concerning a Mission from God, is evident from such Things declared, which none but God could reveal, as Prophecies; and such Things done, which none but God, in Man, could do, as Miracles. Where these are, they are as evident Proofs of a Revelation and Mission from God, as the Works of Creation are a Proof of a Divine Agent. The Works of Creation prove a God, because they are worthy of such an Infinite Cause, and what none but such a Cause could produce: And when such Things are discovered, which none but an Omniscient Being could discover; and such Things done, which none but an Almighty Power could do; we are, by a Parity of Reason, as sure that there is such a Revelation by which such Things are made known, and in Confirmation of

of which ſuch mighty Works are done.

(3.) If this be queſtioned, it muſt be from a Deficiency in God to impart ſuch a Revelation to Man; or that there is an Incapacity in Man to receive it. But how can God's Power herein be queſtioned that he can operate thus on the Soul, when he both created it, and is thoroughly acquainted with all the ſecret Springs of Motion, all the Tendencies and Inclinations, all the Thoughts and Deſires of it, and conſequently muſt be ſuppoſed to have a Power of directing it as he pleaſes? And how can there be any Incapacity in Man, when as to the Matter he can both receive it, and deliver it as he received; and as to the Manner, it's in a way ſuitable to his Faculties, and is therefore call'd here, God's *ſpeaking* to the Prophets, which is ſo as the other may underſtand.

This is a Matter ſo evident, that it has been generally believed throughout the World among the Heathens; and therefore nothing more common than to have Oracles, Places where they were wont to conſult their Deities, as well as the *Jews* had theirs:

Sermon I.

A Subject I am not at present concerned in, but it's sufficient to shew what has been the sense of all Ages in this Case: And which even those that would call this in question, in part consent to, while they grant somewhat equivalent to it, if not a Branch of it, I mean Prophecy; which when it falls not within the Power of any Natural Causes, is the Product of what is Supernatural, and what the Prophet must then receive from a higher Hand, God.

Grant this, and the whole will follow; for if it be possible in one Case, it's possible in all, to one and the same Infinite Power.

III. I am to consider the Expedience, Usefulness, and Necessity of Revelation; for that is here supposed, when it's said, *God spake in time past*, and *in these last days*; that is, from the Beginning of the World to that Time.

Now Revelation is a Means extraordinary (as has been shewed) and consequently such as the Means are, such must the Case be, extraordinary; for God, not doing any Thing in vain, cannot be supposed to use extraordinary

nary Means, where the Caſe is ordinary, and may as well be ſerved by ordinary Means. Thus it is in Miracles, which are Acts above the common Standard of Nature, and are then only exerted, when nothing leſs will engage the Attention or Faith of Mankind. And ſo it is in Revelation, which is to the Light of Reaſon, what Miracles are to the common Law of Nature, Supernatural and Extraordinary; and conſequently where Almighty God takes that Courſe for the Information of Mankind, it ſhews that there is ſome Deficiency or Corruption that calls for it, and makes it expedient and neceſſary. As it was with *Adam* at his firſt Creation, who being an utter Stranger to himſelf, and the World he was at once brought into, without ſome further kind of Information, inſtead of a Pleaſure he might have taken in viewing the Glorious Fabrick of the Heavens, and the Variety of Creatures in the Earth, muſt have been full of Amazement and Confuſion. For in ſo wide a Scene as was before him, where muſt he begin, or where could he hope to end? How divided muſt

Sermon I.

Sermon I.

he be in his own Mind? What a cold and dry Speculation would it have been, if he had hit upon it, to have concluded, with a Modern Philosopher, *Cogito, ergo sum*; *I think, therefore I am?*

He indeed felt himself to be, but how he came to be, he knew not; for he saw nothing about him that could either be supposed to have given him that Being, or could tell him how he came by it. He saw he had a Body, and a Body that obsequiously moved as he pleased to direct and determine; but what that Body was originally made of, he could not possibly tell: For how could he suppose such warm, soft, and tender Flesh, those firm and well compacted Joynts, those radiant and sparkling Eyes (which he had as other living Creatures) that moveable and limber, and well-complectioned Matter of which his Body consisted, should be formed out of cold, moveless, crumbling, and shapeless Earth?

He felt his Body move, and pliable in all its Motions to his Will, and quick as Thought to answer his Mind, but what that inward Principle

ple was that moved it, he was wholly ignorant; nor could he poſſibly, of himſelf at that Inſtant, conceive that there was an Immaterial Spirit that was vitally United to a Groſs and Material Body, that was the Principle of all, and was as diſtinct from the Body in its Nature and Subſiſtence, as if it were not United at all to it. He might obſerve the Creatures about him of different Sorts, that there were certain Notes that each Kind had, and all were known and underſtood among themſelves; but that notwithſtanding they were all dumb to him, and he to them; and what it was that made the Difference, he could not underſtand. When he pleaſed himſelf in the Contemplation of the Heavens above, and that glorious Luminary that gave (as he perceived) Light to all about him; he could not tell whether it was an intelligent Being, and that as it gave Light to all, ſo it was Superior to them: And when that ſet, he knew not but he was to be incloſed in perpetual Darkneſs. When a heavy Stupidneſs began to ſeize himſelf, and he was forced to ſubmit to the Power of it, he knew

Sermon I.

Sermon I.

not but it was to end that Life, which was that Day began, and that he was to close his Eyes, and conclude his Life together.

So that though he had what we call Reason, and suppose it as his Body, in its prime; yet even that Reason must have been his Torment for a while; when it made him inquisitive, but could not give him Satisfaction.

To prevent which Disorder and Confusion he would otherwise be in, at the first opening of his Eyes and his Mind together, as it was necessary that he that was to begin the World, should be Created in a full Age and Strength; and that he that was alone, should have a present Power and Faculty of Elocution and forming of Words for the Conversation he was to have with the *Help* designed for him: So it was requisite that he should have some immediate Inspiration or Impression, to inform him of what was necessary for him to know, as to God, himself, and the World; and which he could not have known without such Inspiration; or the slow and tedious Compass of Observation, and

and ſo muſt have waited for ſatisfaction till Time and Experience had formed his Judgment, and made him a wiſe Philoſopher. Sermon I.

But this *Adam* was at the firſt, and ſo forthwith knew whom it was that he was to own as the Author of his Being, and of what his Body was made, and by what means an intelligent Spirit came to be incloſed in a Material Body; and could as ſoon reſolve all thoſe perplexing Doubts, which otherwiſe he would have been aſſaulted with, as he underſtood at firſt Sight that *Eve was bone of his bone*; and knew how to give Names to the Creatures ſuitable to their Natures, *Gen.* 2. 19, 23.

But now the Reaſons for ſuch an Inſpiration to *Adam* were Perſonal, belonging to him alone; but after what manner the Divine Wiſdom would have imparted the Knowledge of it ſelf to *Adam*'s Poſterity, if he and they had ſtood and continued in a State of Primogenial Innocency; or whether there would, in thoſe Circumſtances, have been any need of a Supernatural Inſpiration after the Revelation made to *Adam*, from whom

Sermon I.

they might have infallibly receiv'd it; no more concerns us, than it doth to know how Mankind would then have been disposed of when they were not to dye, but to have subsisted in the same State, Body and Soul inseparably United: Those are among the *secret things which belong unto God*, but *things revealed belong unto us.*

We must therefore alter the Scene, and consider Mankind in a State of Imperfection and Depravation; and there we shall find Revelation absolutely necessary as a Remedy against a fourfold Mischief, which, without it, would undeniably ensue; as with respect to the Confusion *Adam* was in by reason of Guilt; the Danger he was in from his Enemy, the subtle and malicious Serpent; the Discouragement he was under from the Impotency and Disorder he found in his Faculties; which like a Dislocation in the Joynts, though fit in themselves for Action, yet being removed out of their Sockets, are not capable of Discharging their Functions: And the Misery, that he could not but be sensible was coming upon him from the Depravation of his Nature.

This

This being the State of Fallen Man, there was need of a Supervenient Revelation to recover him, as well as it was the Determination of the Divine Goodneſs to deſign it. Sermon I.

There was need of this to comfort him under the Senſe of his Apoſtacy, and the Guilt he had contracted, to prevent his Deſpair: To fortify him againſt the Power of his inſolent and triumphant Adverſary, and to aid him under his contracted Diſability, for preventing his Diſcouragement: And to caution him againſt the ſad Effects of his Depravation, or the falling into a Repetition of a new Diſobedience, for preventing his Preſumption.

For theſe Reaſons Almighty God ſo ſoon interpoſed in the Garden by a new Revelation of Himſelf, and inſtructed him both in his gracious Deſign to reſtore him to Favour, and in the Method he would obſerve for that Purpoſe. This is implied in what he ſaith to the Serpent, *Gen.* 3 15. *I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy ſeed and her ſeed: it ſhall bruiſe thy head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his Heel.*

Sermon I.

Thus the Gospel was preach'd to *Adam*, who was the first Prophet to whom the Mystery of Salvation was revealed; to which those Places in the *New Testament* seem to refer to, *Luke* 1. 70. *As he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets since the World began*; ἀπ' αἰῶνος, from the Beginning, so *Acts* 3. 21.

This was the Case of *Adam*, and the Exigence he would have been in, without this immediate and comfortable Revelation.

And the Condition of his Posterity would have been worse than his, had this Revelation died with this their Progenitor, and not have been transmitted to them.

For besides the State of Guilt, which must equally have invaded them as it did him, and what Conscience in them could no more quietly digest, than in him; there were several Disadvantages they laboured under, which he did not.

As if we consider *Adam* in a bare State of Nature (without any Supernatural Provision) he had this Advantage above his Posterity, That being the first Man, and created in a full

full Age, he was free from all Pre-poſſeſſions of Senſe or Education; and in the firſt Moment of his Being, had his Reaſon clear in the Fountain of it, like the Sun in its Meridian Glory; and all his Faculties bright, and as ripe at once for Obſervation and Reflection, as his Body was for Action. Sermon 1.

But his Poſterity growing up from their Infancy among ſenſible Objects, from thence would (in a meer Courſe of Nature) have received all their Information; and by ſlow Degrees from Things Viſible, muſt have argued themſelves into the Belief of Things Inviſible; And from the Effects of a Supreme Cauſe, to the Supreme Cauſe it ſelf; which in the Apoſtle's Words, *Acts* 17. 27. would be to *ſeek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him,* [ψηλαφήσειαν, as Men blundering in the dark] *and find him.*

In ſuch Danger would the Fundamental Principles of Natural Religion have been, if there had been no Revelation to prevent it: And this was the Reaſon of ſuch a Proviſion by Inſpired Perſons, to preſerve thoſe Principles alive and ſafe; of the number

Sermon I.

ber of whom *Abel* is accounted, and therefore called a Prophet, *Luke* 11. 50, 51. and *Enoch*, *Jude* 14. and *Noah*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 5.

But now as the Rays of the Sun, the farther they are projected, grow weaker and weaker; so it was in the Derivation of these Principles, which lost very much of their Primitive Lustre; and notwithstanding the Certainty of the Evidence, the Credibility and Authority of those Holy Patriarchs; Vice, like a Deluge, broke in upon the World, so that *every imagination of the thoughts of their Hearts* (generally speaking) *was only evil continually*, Gen. 6. 5.

And if now when there was a Revelation, and a Revelation seconded by the Authority of such Eminent Persons, the World so soon grew corrupted, what would it not have been, if there had been no such Revelation, or no such Curators of it?

This the World was soon sensible of after the Flood; for notwithstanding so late and astonishing an Instance of the Divine Vengeance, yet in their several Dispersions, for want of a Revelation, they lost the sense

of

of the true and great Principles of Religion; ſome, as the *Chaldeans*, turning it into a vain Inquiry into the Influences of the Heavenly Bodies; others placing their Religion in ridiculous and opprobrious Superſtitions, as the *Egyptians*; others pleaſing themſelves in nice Diſputations, and the Vanity of new diſcovered Deities and Religions, as the *Greeks*: And all acting in Divine Matters, as if they were in inextricable Labyrinths, being diſtracted and eternally divided about the Origine of the World, whether it were Eternal, or Accidental, or the Product of a Divine Power; about the Origine of Evil, whether it was natural, or proceeded from ſome malevolent Agent; about the Government of the World, whether it be by different Deities, Good or Evil; or whether by none, but be wholly acted by the Levity of Chance, or the immutable Law of Deſtiny and Fate. Sermon I.

So that in proceſs of Time the World was brought into the Condition of *Elymas*, Acts 13. 8, 11. that once had the Advantage and Pleaſure of Sight, but upon the Oppoſition he made

Sermon I.

made to St. *Paul*, *immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.* Too close a Representation of the Condition of Mankind in that Degenerate State, who *because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God----- but became vain in their imaginations; and their foolish heart was darkned*, Romans 1. 21. Of which Darkness and Confusion in Matters of the greatest Importance, the World, the Commonalty as well as the Philosophical Part of Mankind, was sensible, and of the Necessity of a Revelation, or somewhat beyond Nature, Reason and Argumentation, to remove these Difficulties, to inform them of what they could not otherwise know, and to clear up to them what they did know, but imperfectly.

Of which, I shall offer some undeniable Instances.

1. They universally complained of the Loss they were at, and of the Insufficiency of all their Maxims and Principles, of all their Enquiries and Speculations, to give them any tolerable Satisfaction; so that they were in nothing more divided, than about

about what Happineſs is, as St. *Auſtin* from *Varro* has ſhew'd: And therefore there was ſomewhat further neceſſary to ſatisfie them, or elſe they muſt for ever remain unſatisfied. Sermon I.

2. There was nothing more deſired than a Revelation, and therefore they were prone to hearken to all Pretences to it; and when they conceived, or were made to believe it was a Revelation, they were in nothing more obſequious and pliable. So that to gain Authority to his Laws, and to keep the People quiet and orderly, *Numa Pompilius* did then pretend he had all by Revelation from the Nymph *Egeria*; as *Mahomet* of later Years, from the Angel *Gabriel*, or immediate Infuſion. And of ſuch Authority was this Pretence, that as *Tully* ſaith, *There was nothing ſo abſurd which was not maintained by ſome of the Philoſophers*; ſo I may ſay, There was nothing ſo fooliſh, or wicked, which was not an Ingredient in the Worſhip they gave to their Deities. Inſomuch, as the Nature of Things ſhould be perverted, Reaſon and Humanity ſhould be abandoned, and God himſelf be made worſe than thoſe that worſhiped him, in com-

Sermon I.

Compliance with their pretended Revelations. What Beastiality and Lewdness! what savage and barbarous Practices and Rites were allowed and required! The Blood of Captives, and of their own Children, must be a Libation; nay, even Suicide was not only Honourable, but a Religious Martyrdom, if the Oracle commanded it; and they chose rather to be unnatural to the highest Degree, than not to be Obedient to Divine Revelation. Now of what Authority must that be, which should over-rule the Laws of Nature, and so infatuate Mankind, that they should not be able to espy the Imposture? And what could thus impose upon them, if they were not sensible of the imperfect State they were in, and the Need they stood in of some higher Principle, and greater Light to direct them, than that of Nature?

3 There was no Nation without a Revelation, that is, without some Pretence to it, and which they generally vouched for their Rites and Religious Observances; from whence it was, that there was scarcely a People of any Note in the more Civilized Parts of

of the World that had not their Sibyls, ſuch as were accounted to be the Mouth of their God; to be ſure none in any Part of the known World without an Oracle, that they repaired to, and whoſe Injunctions they readily obeyed. Sermon I.

The Uſe I make of all this is to ſhow, what a Senſe Mankind had of a Revelation, and what all the World has thought Expedient, if not Neceſſary, which was the Thing to be proved.

From what has been ſaid, we may obſerve,

I. What a Happineſs it is to have a Revelation, by which Mankind are *brought out of darkneſs into a marvellous light*; and from an endleſs and fruitleſs Enquiry, *Who will ſhew us any good?* are placed in a quiet and full Poſſeſſion of it. If there be no Revelation, we are, as it were, *without God in the world*; and know not whether that Divine Power be our Friend or our Enemy; or whether it ſhall be exerted to our Good or our Ruin. If there be no Revelation, *we are ſtill in our ſins*, and have no Sanctuary againſt the Accuſation of our own embittered Conſciences, the Fears

Sermon I.

Fears of our own guilty Minds, or the Justice of an incensed Deity. If there be no Revelation, we have *no hope*, and can have no Comfort in our Death, and no Assurance of Immortality after it. If there be no Revelation, we are in a perpetual Maze, as if we were at Sea without Star or Compass, and knew not what Course to take to gain our Harbour. So thoughtful and pensive, so confounded and lost is Mankind without this, that if I were to chuse whether I would have no Revelation, or a false one, for the quiet of my own Mind (did I believe the false one to be true) I would rather chuse the Content of the latter, than the Distraction of the former, and leave it to my own Reason to rectifie the manifest Mistakes in it, rather than have my hovering Reason to be my constant Affliction under the Want of Revelation.

But Blessed be God that there is no Cause for such a Supposition, and that we have all the Reason in the World to believe there is a Revelation; a Revelation that is such as all Mankind would desire, that touches upon all Points necessary to our Comfort and

and entire Satisfaction, as to the Nature and Will of God, the preſent and future State of Mankind, the Providence that governs this World, and the Rewards of another. A Revelation, where all the Parts of it agree together, and bear a Conformity to the Nature of Things, to the Holineſs, Juſtice, and Mercy of God, and to the Reaſon of Mankind; where there is a Syſtem of the beſt Principles, and a Scheme of the beſt Rules and Directions; and which, like the Book of Nature, the more it's viewed and conſulted, the more do the lively Characters of a Divine Hand and Wiſdom appear in the Compoſure.

Sermon L.

A Character this is that the Book of Scripture exactly anſwers. For what Holy Precepts! What Heavenly Promiſes! What Uſeful Examples! What Excellent Encouragements, do the Sacred Pages abound in! Such as are ſufficient to direct us in every Point of our Duty, to inform us in every neceſſary Truth, to eſtabliſh our Hearts in every Condition of Life, to enable us to encounter all the Difficulties of it with Reſolution, and to

Sermon I.

bear all the Evil of it with Patience and Resignation. Here behold God reconciled to Mankind, the trembling Sinner pardoned, the Weak sustained, the Doubtful satisfied, and nothing wanting on God's Part to make us Happy, if we are not wanting in a fit Disposition of Mind to receive it.

So that if there be any Revelation, it is the Christian; if that be not a Revelation from God, there is no Revelation in the World; and if that be a Revelation, that only is so, and there can be no other.

II. Such as the Revelation is, such is the Obligation; the Authority it receives from God, the Obligation lies upon us to obey, as well as believe it. *The times of ignorance God winked at*, and overlook'd; *but now he commandeth all Men every where to repent*, Acts 17. 30. He hath *commanded* them by a Revelation, which is of universal Concernment, and extends its Authority over the World. So that a bad Man is no better or safer for a Revelation, how perfect soever it be, and how great soever the Advantages of it are, than he that is without Revelation; nay, so much the worse, as the

the latter is a State of Unbelief, the former of Disobedience; this errs without his Will, but the other with it. and therefore if the Heathens, who had only the Book of Nature to read, and a faltring Reason for their Guide, were yet so far inexcusable, because that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God*, Rom. 1. 21. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? which at first was spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by those that heard him; God also bearing them Witness*, &c. *Heb.* 2. 3, 4.

Sermon I.

What remains then, but since *the Grace of God*, in the Revelation of the *Gospel, hath appeared unto all men*, that we be thereby taught to *deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present World.* And then we may comfortably *look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. 2. 11.

SERMON II.

HEB. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.

IN which Words, I have obſerved there is,

I. A Deſcription given of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*, and declaring his Will to Perſons choſen for that Purpoſe.

II. The *Certainty* of it; 'tis by way of Declaration, and taken for granted, *God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake*, &c.

III. The

III. The Order obſerved in delivering this Revelation; it was *at ſundry times*, and *in divers manners*: *In time paſt by the Prophets*, and *in the laſt days by his Son.* It was πολυμερῶς, in parts, and in ſeveral Periods and Manifeſtations; and πολυτρόπως, in ſeveral Ways, by Illapſes, Viſions, *&c.*

IV. The Perfection and Concluſion of all, 'tis *in the laſt days by his Son; whom he hath appointed heir of all things*, &c.

Under the firſt I have ſhewed,

1. What we mean by Revelation, in contradiſtinction to Natural Light.

2. The Poſſibility of it.

3. The Expedience, Uſefulneſs, and Neceſſity of it.

It is the Second I am to proceed to, *viz.* The *Certainty.*

Under which I ſhall ſhew,

I. That God has reveal'd himſelf; or that there has been ſuch Revelation.

II. The Difference between pretended and Real Revelation.

III. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament contain ſuch a Revelation, and have upon them all

Sermon II. the Characters neceſſary and belonging to ſuch Revelation.

I. That there has been a Divine Revelation.

What I have principally in my Eye, is the Proof of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures; but for the preſent I ſhall lay that aſide, and take my Riſe towards it from ſuch general Principles and Obſervations as are founded upon Reaſon; or ſuch particular Inſtances and Matters of Fact as manifeſtly proceeded from Revelation.

And accordingly I ſhall diſpoſe of what I have to ſay in Proof of it under theſe Four Heads; as we have for it,

1. A Rational or Moral Evidence.
2. A Natural.
3. A Traditionary or Teſtimony.
4. A Supernatural.

Firſt, Moral: Where in the firſt place I take for granted what I have before proved, *viz.* That a Divine Revelation is Expedient, Uſeful, and Neceſſary; and upon that Suppoſition ſhall attempt to prove the *Certainty* of it. I ac-

I acknowledge, where the Neceſſity is created by our own Fault, there lies no Obligation upon the Creator to provide a Remedy; and ſince the Neceſſity Mankind is now in, proceeded from their Apoſtacy, that Neceſſity can in reaſon be no juſt Plea for it, nor a ſufficient Excuſe in the want of it. When Man was created in ſuch a State as made Revelation a neceſſary Help to his Reaſon, God immediately afforded him ſuch an extraordinary Manifeſtation of himſelf: But when he forfeited that Divine Gift, he could have no allowable Right or Claim to it; For *to him that hath*, and improves what he hath, *ſhall be given*; but to *him that hath not*, and takes no care to preſerve and improve it, may juſtly be denied what was otherwiſe fit and neceſſary for him to have. Sermon II. *Matth.* 13. 12.

This indeed is the Caſe, if rigorouſly ſtated; but conſidering the miſerable Circumſtances Mankind were in after the Fall, more eſpecially through want of a Revelation, we may reaſonably conclude, That the Goodneſs of God would no leſs in-

Sermon II.

cline him to give it, than if he had been obliged to it by a ſpecial Grant, Promiſe, or Covenant. Decrees are Secrets lock'd up in the Breaſt of Almighty God; and whatever Good is therein intended, how beneficial ſoever they may be in the Event, yet afford no Satisfaction to us, till they are opened and revealed: And though the Redemption of Mankind were decreed, and were according to Circumſtances to operate, and in due ſeaſon to be fully executed, yet what would They have been the better, if for 4000 Years together that Decree had lay hid in the Boſom of the Father, and the Decree had never been a Promiſe, and that Promiſe had never before that time been revealed unto them? So that had we no ſuch Promiſe upon Record, as *The ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the Serpent's Head*; yet however, we might be as ſure that there was ſome ſuch Kind of Revelation made to *Adam*, ſome Promiſe of Forgiveneſs, when God did intend to redeem him and all Mankind, as there was a Deſign to redeem them: It being as neceſſary toward their preſent Comfort to have a Revela-

tion

tion of that Mercy in their Redemption, as Redemption it self was necessary toward their Happiness. Sermon II.

And this will farther be confirm'd, if we consider what has been before proved in the former Discourse, That all Men have had a Sense of the Want of a Revelation; and have been possess'd with an earnest and impatient Desire of obtaining it; which being a Desire becoming Human Nature, useful and fit to be cherish'd, it is not to be conceiv'd, that where there is Provision made to answer all sensible and natural Appetites throughout the Creation, that this no less importunate, tho' supervenient Desire, should have no Regard paid to it, but be suffered, like *Etna*, to be always burning within, tormenting, as it were, the Bowels of Mankind with an unquenchable Fire, or an unsatiable Desire of knowing what was not to be known, and of obtaining what was not to be obtained. This is a State that the Consideration of God's Goodness will not admit us to suppose; and we must therefore necessarily conclude, That the same Divine Power and Wisdom that made Man a reasonable

Sermon II.

sonable and inquisitive Being, and has allowed him a World of Wonders to employ that Faculty in the Contemplation of, hath also provided for that Noble Desire of knowing what the Will of his Maker is, and what relates to his own Eternal Welfare; and that is, by a Revelation. Indeed without this, 'tis with him as with one that is born blind, that whatever other Evidence he may have of the Being of a God, wants one of the most convincing of all, which is, The Wonders of an Almighty Power and Incomprehensible Wisdom, conspicuous in the Frame of Nature, and the visible Parts of the Creation: So whatever Sense Men, that have only Reason for their Guide, may have of the Mercy and Goodness of God; whatever they may observe in the Course of his Providence to confirm them in the Belief of it; whatever Hopes they may have of it, from the general Notion of the Divine Nature; whatever Desire they may have of it, from a Sense of their own Misery, yet they want that Evidence of it, which, as we find by constant Experience, alone can satisfy and compose their doubt-

doubtful and distracted Minds, and that is *Certainty*, or, which is the same, *Revelation*, by which, and nothing less, that *Certainty* is to be attained. And therefore we have just Reason to believe That was not wanting to the First Ages of the World: For the same Reason we have to believe God to be good, the like Reason we have to believe that he did after that Manner make himself known in those early Times from the first, to Mankind. Sermon II.

But it may be said, What is all this Reasoning to Matter of Fact? For if after all there has been no such Revelation, or no Proof can be made of it, That is more than a Thousand Speculative Arguments for it. And besides, supposing there was once a Revelation, what was that to those Ages and Nations that afterwards wanted it, and were condemned, as it were, to *sit in darkness, and the shadow of death?*

The last of these is not to be denied, and so I shall first of all consider it. And in Answer to it, it shall suffice to say for the present, That if there has been such a Revelation made known to the World, and all due Care taken by the Almighty and Beneficent

Sermon II.

neficent Creator for the Preſervation of it, and it afterwards be damnified or corrupted, or in fine utterly loſt, through the Negligence or Perverſeneſs of Men themſelves, the Fault of the Miſcarriage wholly reſts upon them. The making known the Revelation, was an extraordinary Caſe, and is a voluntary Act of Grace and Favour in Almighty God; the Preſervation of it is the ordinary Caſe, and belongs to Men: and when once the Extraordinary Caſe becomes Ordinary, God leaves it to its proper and natural Courſe to Second Cauſes, to Human Prudence, Care, and Inſpection.

Thus it is with Reaſon, the Nobleſt Principle of Human Nature, which, if not attended and nurtur'd, may degenerate into Stupidity, and a kind of Brutality. As it has happened to ſome Nations in the *Southern* Parts of *Africa*, *Weſt-Tartary*, and *Weſt-Indies*, that notwithſtanding the Characters of an Almighty Being, legibly ſtamped upon the Face of the whole and every Part of the Creation, have ſo far degenerated, that it has been queſtioned, Whether they have had any Notion

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or Senſe of a God, or any Sort of Worſhip for him. And ſo it is in the Caſe before us: For as God had made a ſpecial Revelation of himſelf to *Adam* after, as well as before the Fall, ſo he took a very effectual way for the Conveyance and Preſervation of it, by the Longævity of thoſe Patriarchs with whom it was depoſited, and who were to take Care that it might be preſerved inviolable: Three of which alone fill'd up the firſt Period of 1656 Years, from the Creation to the Flood; *viz. Adam*, *Methuſelah*, and *Noah*: So that *Methuſelah* lived 243 Years with *Adam*, (for ſo old was he when *Adam* died); and *Noah* lived 600 Years with *Methuſelah* (for ſo old was *Noah* when *Methuſelah* died, and the Flood came). And Four again of the Fathers after the Flood (though the Extent of their Lives was ſhortned) fell in with the 856 Years from the Flood to the giving of the Law by *Moſes* at *Sinai*: So that *Abraham* is ſuppoſed to have lived 150 Years with *Shem*, *Jacob* about 20 with *Abraham*, *Levi* 60 Years with *Jacob*; and *Amram* the Father of *Moſes* lived in the Time of his Grandfather *Levi*. Sermon II.

Now

Sermon II.

Now what Courſe, in the Circumſtances and the State the World was at that Time in, could be more fit, if duly obſerved, for conveying the Matter of a Revelation through the ſeveral Periods and Ages of the World, ſo far as Perſonal Teaching was ſufficient?

And eſpecially, when the Things revealed, and after this Manner to be delivered from Age to Age, were of Importance ſufficient to oblige both Teacher and Scholar; and withal ſo few, as might without any Difficulty be retained. And therefore, if notwithſtanding the Method taken by Almighty God for the regiſtring what he had revealed in the Memories of Men, and for delivering it down to future Ages, there was afterwards no Care taken on their Part, and no reaſonable Proviſion made for conſerving ſuch a Revelation, but that in proceſs of Time, it was either totally obliterated, or vilely corrupted, the Miſcarriage was (as I have ſaid) wholly chargeable upon ſuch as by their Negligence or Wickedneſs *made* Mankind *to ſin*, in not delivering, or not faithfully delivering down to Poſterity what they them-

themſelves had received in its Original Purity from their Anceſtors. The Caſe is indeed very lamentable, but what is not to be helped, without Almighty God alters the Nature of Things, turns them out of their proper and ordinary Courſe, and acts ſolely by his own Power and Prerogative, either without or above the Agency of Second Cauſes. Which is no more with Reaſon to be expected, than that when God has made the Earth in its own Nature fertile, and capable of yielding all Things neceſſary for Man's Subſiſtance, with Cultivation; that He ſhould alſo be obliged to continue it in the ſame State it was created in; and when by the Sloth and Stupidity of Men it brought forth nothing but Thorns and Thiſtles, ſhould miraculouſly make every Tree that is *pleaſant to the ſight, and good for food*, and whatever was beneficial and neceſſary, to grow out of the Ground, as at firſt, and before there was a *Man to till the Ground*. Now if this be unreaſonable for Man to expect, it is ſo then in the Caſe of Revelation, which God had committed to the Cuſtody of Men themſelves, and made them, whoſe

Sermon II.

whoſe Intereſt it was, to be the Conſervators of it.

Having thus far conſidered the Caſe of thoſe that had not, or have no Revelation, I ſhall return to the main Point, which is, To ſhew that there has been ſuch a Revelation. And that brings me to the

Second Sort of Proof, which I call *Natural*, as it belongs to Things Natural, and is oppoſed to what is of mere Inſtitution, (which I conceive to be equivalent to Revelation): And they are Speech, and common Notions.

1. *Speech:* For which there is in a Man a Natural Capacity, and Organs admirably contrived and diſpoſed (as we ſee by Experience). But now, there is a vaſt Difference in that Caſe betwixt Us and other Creatures; for other Creatures have not only Organs as we have, fitted for their proper Notes, but at once have all thoſe Organs in Tune and Operation; ſo that whatever they would ſignifie in their Way, and according to their Kind, they immediately thereby expreſs: But though the Organs of Speech in us are as exquiſitely framed, yet we gradually grow up to the Uſe of them; and

and again, can never apply them, or know how to use them, without some precedent Instruction: And therefore it has been the Opinion of many, That without hearing others speak, we should be eternally dumb *; as the Experiment of *Psammeticus* King of *Egypt* shews †, (if true) of shutting up Two Children in separate Caves, where they never heard one Articulate Word, and so could use none.

* *Postellus lib. de Orig. c. 4.*

† *Herodotus Euterp. c. 2.*

So that now Man must be taught, and as he is taught, so he speaks. But we will put the Case in which there was no Human Instructor, and yet the Person spoke as articulately, and had the free Use of Words, and knew as well how to express his Mind by them from the very first, as if he had had the best Helps for it in the World, and had been never so long a Time versed and practised in it: And that Person was *Adam*, who was created in a full Age, and had none before him; and yet must as soon have Words for Use, and Skill how to use them, as he had to give Names to the Creatures, according to their several kinds. For without this, what

Sermon II.

Converſation could he have with *Eve*, or what Comfort could he take in her Preſence, (for it was not to be call'd Society); and what a Dejection muſt there be in each of them, when all Creatures had their Notes according to the Species they were of, but they themſelves alone were mute. So that though 'tis not expreſly ſaid, That *Adam* and *Eve* had any Diſcourſe, yet 'tis as certain from the Reaſon of the Thing, as it is that God ſpake to them, or the Serpent and *Eve* ſpake together. But 'tis certain *Adam* muſt then be ſelf-inſtructed, or be inſtructed by God: He muſt then invent a Language of himſelf, or he muſt be taught by him that made him. If he was to teach himſelf, how could he know that he was able to ſpeak; or how can we think he would begin his Converſation by an Attempt that Way? For 'tis highly probable, that thoſe two would firſt have began with dumb Signs, or ſome external Motions (as we ſee they ordinarily do, that have no Words which others can underſtand); or if he ſhould at length have found out ſuch an Expedient, and formed ſome Articulate Sounds, yet what a tedious Courſe

Courſe would this have been, and how long before it could be wrought into a Language, that they could firſt think of Words, and then remember them, and then uſe them, and then fall into Diſcourſe? Don't we find how difficult it is to learn to ſpeak a Language, when we have all Advantages for it, by Inſtruction and Diſcourſe with thoſe that ſpeak it; But ſuppoſe Two Perſons wholly Strangers to one another, and of a Language as different as *Chineſe* and *Engliſh*, ſhould meet together, and be conſtrained by Circumſtances, being without other Society, to converſe with each other; though each had a Language of their own, and knew how to ſpeak and form Words for Pronunciation, yet how long would it be before they could fix the Words for it, and to have a Term for every Thing they were to diſcourſe about; to invent and agree upon it, and then to remember them, and then to uſe them? And then much more will the Difficulties increaſe, were theſe Two in the Caſe of *Adam* and *Eve*, and to beat out the Track which never any walked in before; to invent Speech it ſelf, and Words to be ſpo-

Sermon II.

Sermon II.

ken, and sufficient to express the Thoughts of each other, so as to make Company, and that Company agreeable, acceptable, and useful. This must have been the Work of Time, if it had been practicable; and the Difficulty of it would have made each others Company a Burden, rather than a Pleasure, till such time as they could come to a mutual Understanding of one anothers Minds and Inclinations. And therefore to make them *meet Helps* for each other, it was of Necessity that they should have an extraordinary Power communicated from Heaven, and be enabled by that Instinct as soon to speak, as the other Creatures are in a Course of Nature to utter such Voices as are suitable to their Kind, or as Mankind are to express their Passions of Joy or Sorrow by Laughter or Tears.

So that 'tis not without Reason, I rank the Gift of Speech among those things that are of a Divine Infusion, and so equivalent to Revelation.

2. Another Instance of this kind, is what is usually called Common Notions, or Natural Impressions: *Common Notions*, because they are common

to

to all Mankind; and *Natural Impreſſions*, becauſe they are conceived not to be acquired by any Human Means, ſuch as Education and Inſtruction, Obſervation and Experience; but are imprinted on our Nature by an immediate and ſupernatural Power. Sermon II.

That there are ſuch Notions as all Mankind do agree in, is undeniable; ſuch as the Belief of a God, an Adoration to be given to him; and that there is an Eſſential Difference between Good and Evil, ſo that Good cannot by any Art or Endeavour be made or eſteemed to be Evil, nor Evil Good: For as the Natures of the Things themſelves cannot be altered, ſo neither can our Conceptions of them.

It is as undeniable, That theſe Notions or Impreſſions are ſo early to be diſcovered, and do ſo grow up with our Reaſon, that they ſeem not to be the Effects of our Reaſon, but rather to be antecedent to it; and that it is rather what we find, than what we chuſe; what belongs to our Nature, than what we add to it. And accordingly as we have a Notion, ſo a Senſe of thoſe Things, antecedent to all Reaſoning and Inſtruction, which we call

Sermon II.

Conſcience, *excuſing*, or elſe *accuſing*, according to the Nature of the Things, whether Good or Evil. Now as the Nature of the Things muſt be before our Conception of them, ſo both muſt be before we paſs this practical Judgment upon them: And if we do exerciſe this Faculty antecedent to all Inſtruction, then ſo muſt the Senſe of the Things be, about which it is exerciſed. So the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 2. 14. *When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves: Which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs*, &c. Which is exactly agreeable to the Phraſe of the Wiſeſt among them; So *Ariſtotle* calls it, the *Natural*, *Common*, and *Unwritten Law.*

Ad Nicom. *l.* 4. *c.* 5. *l.* 5. *c.* 9. *l.* 8. *c.* 1. Rhet. l. 1. *c.* 10, 13, 15.

But above all, *Cicero* (who beſt knew the Senſe of the Philoſophers, and how to expreſs it) doth ſpeak fully to this Point, both as to the Univerſality of theſe Firſt Notions, and the Agreement in them by all Mankind, both as to the Nature and Riſe of them. *There is*, ſaith he, *a certain Law, not written, but native to us, which*

Pro Milone.

we

we have not learned, received, nor read: But we have taken and derived it from Nature it self; to which we were not taught to be conformed, but made; it was not by Institution, but Infusion. This, in another Place, he saith all Men have by a *certain Anticipation*, and calls them *innate Cogitations*; and will allow it to come from no less a Power than what is Divine. *We have*, saith he, *received a Conscience from the Immortal Gods, which cannot be plucked away from us.*

Sermon II.

L. 1. de Nat. Deor. & L. 2. de Legib.

Pro Cluentio.

So that whatever Improvement these Notions and Impressions may receive from an after-Instruction, yet they seem to be implanted in us by the same Power that made us reasonable Creatures, who no more could leave himself without Witness in our Minds, than in the Works of Nature. And being thus antecedent to our own Reasoning, or other Information, can proceed from no other a Principle than Revelation doth, and is therefore equivalent to it.

Thirdly. There is a Traditionary Proof of Revelation, which is by Testimony, or by such Instances as are a Part of the Revelation; and of which, as I

Sermon II.

conceive, no tolerable Account can be given, if they are not allowed to be of Divine Inſtitution. In order to which,

1. I obſerve, That the Want of a Revelation in any particular Nation or Age, is not an Argument ſufficient to prove that there never was any Revelation. For Revelation being more eſpecially of Things not knowable by the mere Light of Nature, may be loſt, while the Light of Nature remains. It being in this Caſe much as it is in Matters of Hiſtory, which may be derived from one Generation to another, and eſpecially by Regiſters and Memorials: But if a former Generation be careleſs and ſlothful, or the Records not faithfully wrote or kept, the Matters of Fact in one Age are irrecoverably loſt in the next, or turned into Fables. Of which, the Earlieſt Times are too manifeſt an Inſtance, and for which Reaſon *Varro* did not divide them amiſs, into ἄδηλον & μυθικὸν, *obſcure* or unknown, and *fabulous*. Which laſted till the Firſt Olympiad, and that was, at ſooneſt, *Anno Mundi* 3173; when the Hiſtorical Age, according to him, begins. Now as the Want

Want of such Histories will not prove that there never were any such, and much less that there were no Matters of Fact for the furnishing such Histories: So though there be no Revelation, or no Memorials of such a Revelation, in some particular Nations or Ages, it will not necessarily follow that there never was any such Revelation made to the World. Sermon II.

2. When I propose the Proof of a Revelation, I would not be understood so much as to suppose, That there was from the beginning, or before the Time of *Moses*, a Pandect or Collection of Divine Revelations; but only that there were Inspired Persons to whom God did (as occasion served) reveal himself *in sundry times and divers manners*, such as *Adam*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, &c.

3. Where there has been or is no Revelation, or Pretence to it (if any such Age or People ever were), yet there are or have been in those Ages or Nations, certain Footsteps of such a Revelation; and which, wherever they are found, are as evident Marks of such a Revelation, as Pillars or Crosses found in a Country at present uninhabited are, that there have been some

Sermon II.

ſome Perſons that have been there before, and have erected thoſe Monuments.

4. I account ſuch Uſages, Rites, and Principles, to proceed from Revelation, that have no Foundation in Reaſon, and the Nature of the Thing, but are correſpondent to what we call Revelation; and which can well have no Reaſon at all aſſigned for them, if not the Reaſon given in that Revelation: Such are Expiatory Sacrifices, and other Things relating to Divine Worſhip.

5. This is the more confirmed, if ſuch Uſages, Rites and Principles have been obſerved, practiſed, and believed, in Nations that have had no Relation one to another, no Commerce or Communication, nor ſometimes Knowledge of one another; for then they muſt ariſe from ſome common Head, from whence they were aboriginally diſperſed among the ſeveral Branches of the ſame Stock.

When one People has been mixt with another, as the *Jews* and *Egyptians*; or derived from another, as the *Colchi* from the *Egyptians*; or there have been Commerces and Confederacies,

racies, Wars and Conquests, 'tis no Wonder they intermingle in several Rites and Observances. Of this, we have a notorious Instance in Circumcision, which by the aboveſaid Means came to be received by ſeveral Nations, as the *Ethiopians*, *Egyptians*, aud *Colchi*, the *Phœnicians*, and ſome of the *Syrians*, as *Herodotus* ſhews *. But when the Uſages, Rites, and Principles have been as well found where there has been no Communication, as where there has; 'tis no leſs a Sign they deſcend from one and the ſame Original, than when the Waters of the Seven Branches of the River *Nilus* have one and the ſame Taſte and Colour, without any Communication, that they do all deſcend from the main Stream.

Sermon II.

* Clio. cap. 36, 37. *Euterp. cap.* 104. V. Bochart Geogr. Sacr. Phaleg. *l.* 4. *c.* 31.

In like manner, if we find, ſuppoſe, among the Seventy Nations (into which 'tis ſaid Mankind was divided, upon the Confuſion of *Babel*) ſeveral of the ſame Rites aud Uſages, generally ſpeaking, concurring with thoſe of what we call Revelation, we muſt conclude, That they were obſerved before that Diſperſion, and were wholly owing to as early an Inſtitution.

Among the Inſtances that I ſhall make

Sermon II.

make use of for the Proof of a Revelation, I shall begin with those that relate to Divine Worship, such as Time, Sacrifices, *&c.*

1. *Time.* That there is some particular Portion of Time to be set apart for the Publick Worship of God, either by Divine Appointment, or Human Consent, is absolutely necessary, when it is to be the Act of a Society; for Worship, without some Time for such Society to convene and assemble in, must inevitably end in Confusion and Dissolution.

And therefore as God created the World as a Temple to exhibit and manifest himself in, and created such Beings as should in their several Stations celebrate his Praise; so when he had finished all his Work, he established that Day which he rested upon, to be from thenceforward devoted to that Service; as we may see the Institution, *Gen.* 2. 2. I call this an Institution; for when could that be more seasonably instituted by Divine Authority, than at the Close of the Creation, when the Sanctification and the Reason of it were so immediately connected; *God blessed and sanctified it, because*

becauſe in it he had reſted from all his work? It being not probable that there ſhould be at that Time no Inſtitution, when the Reaſon for it is expreſly given; or that there ſhould be no preſent Obligation to obſerve it, when there was an Inſtitution. If God had no ſooner finiſhed his Work, but he *ſanctified* the Day following, 'tis evident that the Obligation to obſerve it muſt begin with the Inſtitution: And if he *ſanctified* it, becauſe on that Day he *reſted*, 'tis as evident the Inſtitution did begin with the Reaſon of it. And then how improbable is it that God ſhould *bleſs* and *ſanctify* a particular Day, and yet for the Space of Two thouſand Years together ſhould leave that Day in common with the other Days of the Week, without any Diſtinction? How improbable again, that it ſhould be firſt inſtituted and made a Duty to the *Jews* only for a Reaſon that equally concerned all Mankind as well as them, becauſe he *reſted*; and for a Reaſon exiſtent from the firſt, as well as in the Time when it was inſtituted at *Sinai?* 'Tis highly unreaſonable to add one *Prolepſis* to another, and to heap

Sermon II.

Sermon II.

heap Figure upon Figure, when there is no Neceſſity for it, contrary to all the Rules of a juſt Interpretation.

Now if this be an Original and Primæval Inſtitution, we have one Inſtance of a Divine Revelation, ſo far as the Scripture is of Authority; and ſurely we may demand in its Behalf, to have as much Regard paid to it as we give to prophane Hiſtories.

But however, we are not without a concurrent Teſtimony from Thoſe alſo in this Particular. For it is manifeſt, that there hath been of great Antiquity ſuch a Diſtribution of Time as we call a Week of Seven Days; and, which is more to our Purpoſe, That the Seventh Day was a Feſtival and Religious Day. This *Lucian* doth more than Intimate; and long before him, *Solon*, who calls it *Moſt Holy Day*, in his Elegies, quoted by *Euſebius** ; and one earlier than he, *Homer*, who calls it, ἱερὸν ἦμαρ, *The Holy Day*. But *Calimachus*, *Homer*, and *Linus*, are ſtill more Particular; for they ſay, it was becauſe all the Works of Creation were then finiſh'd. So *Homer*, Ἕβδομον ἦμαρ ἦεν, ἐν τῷ τετέλεστο

ἅπαντα ;

* *Hiſt. p. 678. Præpar. l. 13. c. 12.*

ἅπαντα; and 'tis therefore call'd by *Linus*, *The Birth-Day of the World.* Sermon II.

Now there is nothing in Nature to point to this; for there is no more to be obſerv'd from the Motion of the Heavens for ſuch a Septenary Diſtribution of Time, or Diviſion into Weeks, than there is for the dividing of a Day into Hours: And conſequently it muſt proceed from ſome Inſtitution, and from a very early Inſtitution, becauſe of what I have obſerved from the fore-recited Authors, who are of great Antiquity, eſpecially *Homer* and *Linus*: For *Homer* is ſuppoſed to have lived in or about the Time of *Saul*, in the Year of the World 2940, and *Linus* in the Time of the *Judges*, about the Year 2570. The Conſideration of which doth make it probable, that theſe Ancient Poets owed their Information to the general Tradition of the World, rather than to the *Jews*. Indeed *Ariſtobulus* the *Jew*, from whom *Euſebius* drew the aboveſaid Teſtimonies, ſaith, theſe Poets had borrowed them from the *Jewiſh* Books. But if it be conſider'd how little the *Jewiſh* Books, the Scriptures, were known to the World before

Sermon II.

before the Tranſlation of them by the Seventy into *Greek*, which was about 300 Years before the Birth of our Saviour; or how little the Opinions of the *Jews* themſelves before the Captivity were known abroad, it will hardly be conceiv'd, that theſe Things ſhould be known ſo early, and ſpoke of ſo poſitively by the *Greek* Poets, *Homer* and *Linus*, within ſo ſhort a Time after the Inſtitution of the Sabbath at *Sinai*, as theſe two liv'd; for *Linus* muſt have liv'd within leſs than Half an hundred Years after the Time of *Moſes*; and *Homer* in leſs than 400. Where if we take the loweſt Term, that of *Homer*, the *Jews* were hardly in a ſettled State, and no more in a Condition, than they were diſpoſed in their Temper, if permitted by their Religion, to inform other Nations in the Articles or Myſteries of their Religion. So that it ſeems very evident, that the Obſervation of the Seventh Day for the Service of God, was an ancient and general Opinion, and eſpecially of thoſe who may be beſt preſumed to underſtand what had been the Senſe of Mankind in the Ages before, or thoſe in which they lived.

J. Scaliger de Emendat. Temp. l. 1.

lived. And if this was the Opinion of those early Times, conformable to the History of Scripture, we have sufficient Reason to offer this as an Instance of a Revelation. Sermon II.

2. Another Instance of Revelation is Sacrifices, and especially those of Expiation. Amongst all the Rites and Usages relating to Divine Worship, there are none that exceed these in their Antiquity (except the Sabbath) or Extent.

For we no sooner read of God's Reconciliation to Mankind, but that they offer'd Sacrifice; no sooner of *Noah*'s Deliverance and Escape out of the Deluge, but he offer'd Sacrifice: And without doubt, as it begun, so it continued, and was as much dispersed and observed among Mankind before the Flood, as after it. But how probable soever it is, that this Rite was thus universally observed before, yet that we are not so certain of, as we are of the Observation of it after the Flood, when there was no Age nor Nation where it was not to be found how dispersed soever they were; of which no tolerable Account is to be given, unless it be allowed to have

Sermon II.

been in use before the Dispersion at *Babel*, and that it was of Divine Institution. It must have been, I say, in use before that Dispersion; for how could all Nations fall into one and the same Practice, and have the same Opinion of Sacrifices, when there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing to lead them to it, if it had not been, that they had all descended from one Blood, from one Family, from one Body, by which means it was convey'd into all the several Branches issuing from it, and went along with them where-ever they went.

Outram de Sacrificiis, l. 1. c. 1.

Now the Question is, Whence this should arise, and what gave it this universal Acceptance and Authority; Whether the Invention of some eminent Persons, suppose, in those early Times? Or whether it was by Revelation from God, and of his special Institution?

There seems no great Reason to think this Service should proceed meerly from the Invention of Men, even of those pious and well-disposed Persons, since (as I have said) there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing to

to lead to it. For how could it be supposed that this should be acceptable to Almighty God, which in it self holds no Conformity, nor is at all suitable to his Nature? *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, and drink the blood of goats?* Is a true Representation of it. *Psalm 50. 13.*

It might become a sanguinary sort of Dæmons, or false Gods, and wicked Spirits, to be pleased with the Fumes and Reakings of the Bleeding Sacrifice, as the Heathens generally thought: But Men of any Understanding would rather chuse a *reasonable Service* for the God that made them reasonable Creatures, and might presume another Sort of Sacrafice would be more acceptable than this, and acceptable without it, *viz.* a Sacrifice of Praise and Prayer, of a pure Mind, and a good Life, which the wiser Heathens did in their Opinion exceedingly prefer. But as for the Sacrifices and Blood of Beasts, such as *Pythagoras* and *Plato* spoke of them often with Regret and Displeasure; and others wonder'd how they first came into the World, as *Porphyry*, that wrote expressly against them. *Euseb. Præpar.*

Sermon II.

What Expreſſion could thereby be given, ſuppoſe, of Mens Gratitude to God for their Being, and their Preſervation? *Who of all Mankind is ſo ſtupidly credulous, ſo fooliſh, that can think the Gods delighted with ſuch a Preſent of Bones, Gall, and Blood, which a hungry Dog would ſcarcely touch; and that they ſhould repay the Favour to thoſe that offer it*; ſaid an ancient Heathen Poet.*

* Quoted by Porphyr. περὶ ἀποχῆς. Lib. 2. Sect. 58.

But if we deſcend to Expiatory Sacrifices, who could think that *the Blood of Bulls and of Goats could take away Sin*, and that God would accept of that as a fit Compenſation for their Crimes; the Blood of a Brute for that of a Man, the Life of one that is not in its own Power, inſtead of him that was?

And if Men were ſo weak as of their own Accord to offer it; can we think the Almighty Creator would accept of what was for it ſelf only unbecoming his Majeſty, and be ſo highly delighted with it, as to teſtify his Acceptance of *Abel*'s by the Deſcent of a Miraculous Fire to conſume it; and to *ſmell a ſweet ſavour* upon *Noah*'s Oblation; to appoint it as a Sign of his Covenant with *Abraham*; and

ἐνεπύρισε. So Theodotion.

Gen. 8. 20, 21.

Gen. 15. 8, 9.

and lastly, to embody it into the *Mosaical* Institution? Sermon II.

It was enough, one would think, that the Majesty of Heaven and Earth had accepted of the good Will of the first Inventors, how poor and low soever the Invention was; but it was too great a Condescension to do by these as the Heathens by their Heroes, to translate them into the Number of their Deities; too much to have such a Mark of the Favour of Heaven, as none of the Divine Institutions could have more.

But why should we think so meanly of those *Ante-deluvian* Patriarchs, of *Adam* and *Abel*, *Enoch* and *Noah*, &c. the first Inventors or Encouragers of this Way of Worship? At this rate happier far were the Inventions of *Jabal*, *Jubal*, and *Tubal-Cain*, that taught others how to order Cattle, to handle the Harp and the Organ, to work in Brass and Iron; for these did serve either the Necessities or Pleasures of Mankind, and were suitable to Gen. 4. 20. their Nature and Condition: But to offer Bestial Sacrifices to an Infinite Spirit, was as if we should present

Sermon II.

Mankind with the Entertainments and Pleasures of the Brutes; and so it cannot be thought that Men (how low soever their Understandings were) would think the Blood of Beasts a decent Present to their Creator, which indeed would not be so to their Superiors here.

But we have another sort of Character of those Holy Men, who were Persons of great Knowledge, and vast Experience; who both received their Religion from the Almighty, were the great Props and Stays of it in their Generation, and to whom the Care of transmitting it to Posterity was committed; and for which Reason, as well as others, God seemed to have protracted their Lives to so vast an Extent. They were such as were eminent for their Piety; as *Abel*'s Faith is one of the renowned Instances, *Heb.* 11. And *Enoch* is said to *walk with God*, and was in an extraordinary Way rewarded for it. Such again were they as were endued with the Spirit of Prophecy, as *Adam*, *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*.

Gen. 5. 22, 24.

Jude, v. 14.

2 *Pet.* 2. 5.

And therefore it cannot in Reason be supposed, that ever they should think

think the offering the Blood, and burning the Flesh of a Beast, to be a fit Expression of their Gratitude to Almighty God, or a Means to obtain his Favour by way of Expiation for their Sins, without his Institution. Sermon II.

It is then (as far as I conceive) evident, that Sacrifices, of what kind soever, were not invented by Men. But if they were not invented by Men, How came they to be admitted, and at last so much to obtain in the World?

I answer, They were of God's own Institution; and therefore were received by the Patriarchs, and accepted by himself.

But then it may reasonably be demanded, Why they should be thus honoured by a Divine Legislation and Authority, when it is allowed that they are in themselves not suitable to his Nature?

I answer, They were instituted as those Sacrifices were Typical, and had respect to a greater Sacrifice, that of Christ. And therefore 'tis observable, That as Almighty God for the Comfort of *Adam*, and preventing his Despair, (as has been before shewed)

Sermon II.

did immediately after his Expoſtulation with him, and Sentence paſs'd upon him, reveal his Intention to pardon him, and the Means by which it was to be procured and ratified, *The Seed of the Woman*: So in Conſequence of this, and to ſhew their Faith in that Promiſe, we read in the next Chapter, of their Sacrifices and Offerings which they brought unto the Lord, as a Repreſentation of what they for their Apoſtacy had deſerved, and ſhould have ſuffered, had not the Divine Mercy interpoſed.

Now if we have repreſented this aright, we have a fair Account of an Expiatory Sacrifice, and how it came to take ſuch Place among Men, and to be ſo univerſally received.

We have a Reaſon again how and why it came to be framed into the Law of *Moſes*; and why theſe, and the Rites belonging to them, were made a principal Part of it, and have thereby a Key to unlock many Myſteries in that Law, and to anſwer many Difficulties about it, when it is a *ſhadow of good things to come*.

Heb. 9. 9.
Heb. 10. 1.

By this Means again we come to underſtand the ſpecial Providence of God,

God, that this was so much preserved, and so universally dispersed and received among Mankind. Sermon II.

By this Means again we have a fair Account how the Doctrine of the Cross, and the Notion of our Saviour's Death as an Expiatory Sacrifice, came to be soon entertained among the *Gentiles*; for being of God's Institution, as he preserved it, so being thus preserved, it became an excellent Introduction, and prepared Mankind for the Belief and Reception of our Redemption by Christ.

To the same Original may the First-Fruits, Priesthood, and Tenths, be referr'd; the first of which was observed from the Time of *Abel*, *Gen.* 3. and the two last long before the Time of the *Mosaical* Law; and therefore are to be derived from an ancient Institution.

But because it may be thought these Instances may be liable to Exception, forasmuch as they are sometimes disputed among those themselves that do contend for a Revelation, I shall proceed to

The *Fourth* Sort of Evidence, which is Supernatural; and that is either it self a Reve-

Sermon II. a Revelation, or the Proof of it; of the former, is Prophecy; of the latter, Miracles.

1. Prophecy, or the foretelling Things to come; whatever Time they are to exist in, near or remote. I add this latter Clause to it, to prevent all Exception, and to distinguish Prophecy truly so call'd, from Sagacity, or Human Providence; which from precedent Observations and proximate Causes, may be often fortunate in its Conjectures or Predictions. But now, as to Infinite Power, all Things are alike possible and easy, and there is nothing great or little, more or less, with respect to it; so to Infinite Knowledge, to which *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*, all Things, the remotest as well as nearest, are alike present; and there is nothing distant or near with respect to it. And therefore where-ever the true Spirit of Prophecy is, the same Power that can foretell what shall happen to Morrow, could, if he so pleased, as easily foretell what shall happen a Thousand Years hence; since *all things are alike naked and opened unto him with whom we have to do.* Now this sort of Know-

Knowledge can proceed from nothing leſs than him, who as he knows all Things, ſo has all Cauſes in his own Power, and can foreſee how they will operate, and what ſhall be the Event of ſuch Operations, or can diſpoſe them to it as he pleaſeth, whatever the Cauſes be, whether (as we uſually ſay) they are Voluntary, Neceſſary, or Contingent; and being thus peculiar to him, and his ſole Prerogative, 'tis no leſs than a Species of Divine Revelation. And therefore as none can know the Certainty of ſuch Futurities and Events but God, ſo none can foretell them but ſuch as he is pleaſed to reveal them to. From whence it was that *Plato* ſomewhere calls Prophecy, κοινωνία, a *Communication* or *Fellowſhip* with God. For ſuppoſe now we ſhould ſet before us any *Epocha* or Character of Time, which the Prophecy reſpects; the 160 Years from *Iſaiah*'s naming of *Cyrus*, to his Decree for building *Jeruſalem*, *Iſa.* 44. 28. Or the 350 Years from the Prophet's naming *Joſiah*, to the Time he defiled thoſe Idolatrous Places, 1 *Kings* 13. 2. 2 *Kings* 23. 16. Or the 490 Years in *Daniel*'s Weeks, from his Time

Sermon II.

Sermon II.

Time to the Death of Messiah, *Dan.* 9. 24. What an Infinite Number of intercurrent Passages must there be, before it be brought in its proper Season to its Accomplishment? And how amazing a Sight would it be, if we could lay our Hand upon the Clue of the Prophecy at its first setting out, and follow it making its Way through all Oppositions and Interferings, to the last Period and Completion! But then if we turn our Thoughts to the chief Subject of Revelation, the Prophecy of the Incarnation of our Saviour, as it began immediately upon the Fall, and passed along through the 61 Generations, for 4000 Years together, it would be like the dispersed Parts of a Human Body, to the Time and State of the Resurrection, that are carried safe and entire through all Transformations; and at last when the *Sea and the Grave* are call'd upon to *give up their dead*, all the Atoms and Particles are recalled from their several Vehicles or Tribes they were joined to, and fall into the same Composition as before in this present State. Much such a Subject have we before us, which after various Windings and Turn-

Turnings, and an infinite Succeſſion of Cauſes and Events, we read, *That it might be fulfilled,-----and as it was ſpoken by the mouth of the holy Prophets, which have been ſince the world began,* Luke 1. 70. Sermon II.

So that as many Prophecies as we have, or the World ever had, ſo many Evidences have we of a Supernatural and Divine Revelation.

And this all Mankind have had a Belief of, as is manifeſt from the Oracles they conſulted upon all emergent Occaſions; many of which were very ancient, as *Herodotus* tells us that of *Jupiter Hammon* in *Lybia* was. I acknowledge that theſe were full of Impoſture, and deſpiſed for it by the Wiſer Part of the Heathens, ſuch as *Tully*, *Lib.* 1, 2. *de Divinat.* and detected, as *Euſebius* ſhews, *Præpar. Evaug. l.* 4. *Init. & l.* 9. *c.* 5.

And I mention theſe, not that I eſteem them of any Authority; rather the contrary; but to ſhew what the World thought of Prophecy, and which even thoſe Philoſophers that diverted themſelves with the Miſtakes and Impoſtures of their own Oracles, never queſtioned whether ever there were

Sermon II.

were any true Prophecy, but always allowed it, and took it for granted.

So that the Impostures of their own Pretenders never engaged them so far, as to call in question the Veracity of all Prophecy, or to deny it where it was able to justify it self.

2. Another sort of Supernatural Evidence, is Miracles; of which, hereafter.

Thus far I have endeavoured to shew, That there has been a Revelation, antecedent to, or where there was no written Revelation: And the Arguments and Instances have been such as were proper to those Circumstances; such as we are led to by the Light of Nature, and Human Observation: And therefore though they receive Light and Confirmation from a written Revelation, are not supposed to depend upon it for their Evidence. And if this Point has been hereby made out and proved, we then find that God has *at sundry times and in divers manners*, revealed himself to Mankind *by the Prophets* and inspired Persons, from the beginning through the *Ante-deluvian* and *Post-deluvian*

luvian Times, 'till the Promulgation of a written Law by *Moſes*. Sermon II.

If it be ſaid, That theſe are far from amounting to a Certainty, and from giving us an infallible Aſſurance of a Revelation, ſince ſome of them are diſputed even among thoſe that own a Revelation; as the Original of the Sabbath, and Sacrifices; and at the moſt are but probable Arguments.

1. I anſwer, Probability is a fair Step to Certainty; and I may after all affirm, That the Account here offer'd, is the beſt that can be given of thoſe Inſtances.

2. There are ſuch Arguments as are taken from the Conſideration of God's Nature; and there cannot be a ſtronger, than what is fetch'd from the Nature of Things.

3. There are other Inſtances that are equivalent to a Revelation, and can proceed from no lower a Principle; ſuch are Speech and Common Notions; the former of which, in the Circumſtances before recited, muſt be from a kind of Divine Inſpiration, and the latter from a Divine Impreſſion.

4. There are thoſe Things, which when they accompany what we call a Re-

Sermon II.

Revelation, prove the Truth and Certainty of it; and being recorded in a written Revelation, become of the Body of it, and they are Miracles.

5. There are others that are the Matter of Revelation, and they are Prophecies, especially such as are carry'd along in a continued Train, and mutually confirm each other.

6. There are others that are not only Consonant to what we own to be a Revelation, but to Human Testimonies; and being confirm'd by both, are of great Authority.

All which laid together, gives us, I may say, unquestionable Evidence, That there has been a Revelation, or that God has made himself and his Will known to the World by Persons chosen out, and inspired, and commission'd by him.

And this is a good Preparative and Introduction for what is to follow, *viz.* That there is a special Revelation, and that Revelation recorded and transmitted by Writing to the World; which is a Point in Reserve, and that will in order be discoursed upon.

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SERMON III.

Heb. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.

IN theſe Words there is, (as I have ſhewed)

I. A Deſcription given of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

II. The Certainty of it; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake*, &c. 'Tis taken for granted, and that it needs no Proof.

Sermon III.

III. The Order obſerv'd in delivering this Revelation; it was *at ſundry times, and in divers manners; in time paſt by the Prophets,* and *in the laſt days by his Son.*

IV. The Perfection and Concluſion of all; 'tis *in the laſt days by his Son.*

Under the Firſt I have ſhewed,

1. What is meant by Revelation, in contradiſtinction to Natural Light.

2. The Poſſibility of it.

3. The Expedience, Uſefulneſs, and Neceſſity of it.

Under the Second I have ſhewed,

1. The Certainty of it; or that there has been ſuch a Revelation.

2. I ſhall now proceed to ſhew the Difference between Pretended and True Revelation; or what are the Characters by which we may know Revelation to be True.

In treating upon which I ſhall premiſe,

1. That the proper Subject-Matter of Revelation, call'd here *God's ſpeaking*, being not ſelf-evident, and out of the Road of Nature, requires ſome extraneous Principles to prove it by. Senſible Objects lye open to the Senſe, and need no Proof; for whoever thought it neceſſary to labour in proving

ving that there is a Sun in the Heavens; that it rises and sets, and has its stated Times and Periods of Revolution; which every Man that has his Eye-sight knows and sees as well as himself? Sermon III.

And there are Rational Inferences which we make from precedent *Postulata*, that are as evident as the Principles from which they are deduc'd, and which all Men alike agree in.

But in Matters of mere Revelation, there is no manner of Connexion between them and what we know before, and are therefore never to be wrought out, or learn'd by the Book of Nature or Reason; but are only to be understood and known, as God is pleased to communicate them. We might search and search eternally, and yet never have found out the Mystery of our Redemption; that Mystery, of which not only the Prophets *enquired and searched diligently*, 1 Pet. 1. 10. but also *the angels desire to look* (or pry) *into*, ver. 12. παρακύψαι; and were oblig'd to wait till *the manifold wisdom of God* was in its proper Time *made known to them by the Church*, Eph. 3. 10. (as has been before suggested).

This then being the Subject of Revelation, 'tis reasonable that this Revelation should have some other ways of Proof; that what is thus Divine in its Discovery, should have a suitable Evidence to justify it.

2. The Matter of Revelation being thus of Divine Inspiration and Authority, must

Sermon III.

also be worthy of God, and of great Importance, and consequently requires a Proof suitable to the Nature and Importance of it.

If the Matter in debate be inconsiderable, we are contented with probable Arguments, nor are we much concern'd which way it is determin'd: As 'tis indifferent whether the Sun or the Earth be the Centre, as long as we receive the Benefit of both: Or whether our Dyet nourishes, or Physick operates by Qualities, or the Texture of its Parts, as long as we find the Happy Effects of it: Let Philosophers and Naturalists write Volumes, and wrangle eternally about these disputable Points, I find not my self concern'd, as long as my Interest is not affected nor concerned in the Quarrel. But when the Matter is of no less consequence than my Eternal Happiness, it requires the most serious Thonghts and Attention to be satisfied which is the Right, and which is the Wrong; whether there be a Revelation, or which is the True, and which the False; especially since there are different Pretenders to it.

3. Revelation being the Declaration of God's Will to Mankind, as he doth not require us to believe without sufficient Evidence, so it doth suppose, that there is such Evidence, and that there are some Marks or Signs by which the Truth and Certainty of such Revelation may be known and proved. For otherwise every Pretender to Revelation would challenge our Belief;

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and we ſhould not know but that the True Revelation might be the Falſe, and the Falſe the True. Sermon III.

4. There are ſome Things ſo neceſſary and inſeparably belonging to Revelation, that the Want of them will utterly overthrow the Veracity and Authority of it, and yet without further Evidence they are not ſufficient to prove it: Of this kind are Self-agreement, a Conſonancy to the Principles of Nature, and to the true and certain Notions of Mankind concerning Good and Evil. We are certain, if a Revelation fails in any one or more of theſe, that it is falſe, and not of Divine Inſpiration: For the Light of Nature, and a true and right Notion of Things, are from God; and to ſuppoſe a Revelation to be oppoſite to theſe, is to make God contradict himſelf. Thus if we underſtand any Thing, we know God to be infinitely Good and Holy, worthy of the profoundeſt and moſt ſolemn Adoration, becauſe of the Perfections of his Nature, and his good Will and Beneficence to Mankind. And therefore to ſacrifice Men and Children, and to mingle the moſt Impure and Ludicrous Practices with the Worſhip paid to him, is rather an Offering to be preſented to the moſt Beaſtly and Savage *Dæmons*, than the Holy and Merciful Creator of all Things; and conſequently cannot be of his Inſtitution. In this Caſe, a Contradiction in the Nature of Things, would be like a Contradiction in Terms, or a

Sermon III.

Contradiction in the Revelation it ſelf: And therefore a Revelation that ſhall evidently contradict them, is a Revelation in Pretence only, it is not Divine.

But though theſe are thus neceſſary to Revelation, that the Want of them is ſufficient to detect what is falſe; yet however it will not follow, That wherever theſe are [*viz.* that becauſe a Sum of Doctrine agrees with it ſelf, is conſonant to the Light of Nature, and the right Notion we have of Things] that it is therefore of Divine Revelation. For though it is ſeldom but the Impoſture fails in one or more of theſe, yet it may have all theſe Characters, and be a Doctrine of Men, of human Contrivance and Compoſure.

And therefore there is ſomewhat farther requiſite to the Proof of a Revelation, ſomewhat peculiar to it, and that ſo belongs to it, as not to be common to any Thing with it.

And that is a Point I ſhall now take into Conſideration. Toward the clearer Proof of which, I ſhall diſtribute it after a Threefold Manner.

1. I ſhall conſider the Caſe of ſuch as were themſelves inſpired, and to whom the Revelation was made, and how they could be ſatisfied of the Truth of ſuch a Revelation.

2. The Caſe of thoſe that received the Matter revealed immediately from the Perſons inſpired, and how they were to judge of the Truth of ſuch a Revelation.

3. The

3. The Case of those that lived in Ages remote from that of the Inspired Persons, and after that the Revelation was compleated, (as was the Case of the *Jews* more especially that lived between the Time of *Malachi*, and *John* the Baptist; and as the Case is of all Christians since the Apostolical Times) and what Satisfaction and Evidence may there be expected in those Circumstances?

1. The Case of those that received the Revelation; and how they themselves could be satisfied about the Certainty of such a Revelation.

The Resolution of this Point belongs in Part to the Third General, under which the Difference remains to be shewed between a Revelation and Imagination. But I shall not wholly refer it thither.

There seems to be so near an Affinity between Revelation and Imagination; and Imagination is so far operative in many Branches of Inspiration, that it is very difficult to set out the Bounds exactly, and to say, This is of Divine Inspiration, and this the Effect of Fancy.

But whatever it may seem to us that have no Sensation or Experience of such Divine Representations as the Prophets had; and so 'tis no more possible for us to describe it, than 'tis for one that never had his Sight, to conceive what Light and Colour is: Yet as the Blind Man may be convinced that there are such Things as Light, Colour, Figure,

Sermon III.

and Sight, by what he hears and obſerves from thoſe that are about him, and that he converſes with: So we may be as well aſſured that there was in Prophetical Schemes that powerful Repreſentation on the Part of the Divine Agent, and that Clearneſs of Perception on the Part of the Perſon Inſpired, as would abundantly make good thoſe Phraſes of *Viſion* and *Speaking*, by which it is deſcribed in Scripture; and which may well be ſuppoſed as much more to Advantage, as the Power that operated upon them was beyond that of mere Imagination. So that thoſe Inſpired Perſons, after ſuch Illumination, might as well queſtion what they heard or ſaw by the Natural Organs of Senſe, as doubt of what was revealed to them by the Impreſſions made upon them through the Agency of the Divine Spirit.

To deny this, is to deny that God can ſo communicate himſelf to an Intelligent Creature, that the Creature ſhall certainly know that it proceeds from his immediate Suggeſtion; which I have before ſhewed it is unreaſonable to queſtion: And indeed what is no more to be queſtioned or denied, becauſe we our ſelves have no Experience of it, than the Blind from their Birth can reaſonably queſtion or deny there is what we call Light and Colour; or the Deaf, that there are Sounds, Voices, and Words, becauſe they have no Notion or Idea of theſe Things. Now if we think it reaſonable, that the Deaf

and

and the Blind ſhould, notwithſtanding a Natural Inaptitude and Incapacity in themſelves, aſſent to what all Mankind beſides do unanimouſly aver, and not call in queſtion the Truth or Poſſibility of what is thus affirmed, becauſe of their Want of Senſation: So it is not fit or reaſonable to think this Way of Revelation never was, and cannot be, becauſe we our ſelves have not an experimental Knowledge of ſuch a Manifeſtation. Sermon III.

For Almighty God can ſo clarify the Underſtanding by a Beam of Light let in from above, as ſhall be as evident a Proof of its Divine Original, as it is that the Light proceeds from the Sun, the Fountain of it; or as a Perſon himſelf is ſure of the Truth of any Propoſition, which by an Argument before unthought of, or unconſider'd, he comes to be fully convinced of, in ſpight of all former Prejudices and Opinions.

So little Truth or Reaſon is there in a bold Aſſertion of a certain Author, That *Revelation is uncertain, and never certain without a ſign:* And therefore, ſaith he, *Abraham*, *Moſes*, and *Gideon*, asked a Sign, over and above Revelation. *Theol. Polit. c. 2.*

But it is far from being true, that thoſe Perſons therefore deſired a Sign, becauſe they conceived the Revelation to be uncertain, or that they doubted of the Truth of it; but as a Sign was for the greater Confirmation of their Faith, in ſome Points difficult to be believed, or in ſome very difficult Services,

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Sermon III.

(for Faith, as other Graces, is capable of Addition and Improvement). In which Cases, their asking a Sign is no more an Evidence of their Distrust of God, or a doubting of the Truth and Certainty of the Revelation, than God's confirming his Promise by an Oath, was an Evidence that he thought not his Word sufficient without it; or than *Abraham* could be supposed not obliged to believe upon a Promise alone, without that superabundant Confirmation of an Oath, *Heb.* 6. 17.

Thus it was even in the Case of that Holy Patriarch, to which this Author refers; where, before ever he asked a Sign, he is said to have so believed in the Lord, that it was *counted to him for righteousness*, Gen. 15. 6, 8. his Faith was highly commended, and he is for that Reason called, *the father of the faithful.*

So that Revelation may be certain when there is no Sign; and the Person was bound to believe it, and was obliged by it, as well where there was no Sign, as where there was.

I grant when Revelation comes at second hand to a Person, and rests on Human Testimony, on the Ability and Sincerity of the Relater, or Person supposed to be inspired, there needs some farther Evidence, some Sign or Signs that are to be, as it were, the Credentials from Heaven; since *all men are liars*, Psal. 116. 11. that is, may be deceived, or may deceive; may either be so

so weak as to be imposed upon by their own Imagination, or the Imposture and Practices of Evil Spirits; or be so wicked, as, under the Pretence of Revelation and Inspiration, to impose upon others. In such a Case, no Man's Affirmation or Pretence is ordinarily to be heeded, further than as he is able to produce such Testimonies as are really as Divine as he would have his Revelation accounted to be. Sermon III.

But when a Person is himself the Recipient to whom the Revelation is imparted, there is no absolute need of a Sign or further Evidence to ascertain the Truth of it to him; when, if God so pleases, the Revelation of it self might be made as clear as it could be made by the Sign. What need is there of a Sign to prove that it is Day, when by the Light of it we see every Thing about us? Or to justify the Truth of a self-evident Proposition? These are Things in their own Nature that need no Proof. And when a Revelation has an Evidence of its own, as Truth has, it needs no other Light to discover it, no further Sign to prove it, for its own Sake, and as to the Person to whom the Revelation is made. A Sign therefore makes no Alteration in the Evidence; for whether with a Sign, or without a Sign, the Revelation is to be believed; for else they that had a Revelation without a Sign, were not obliged to believe, and the Revelation without the Sign had in Effect been

Sermon III.

been no Revelation; since no one is obliged to believe, where there is no Reason for it; and there is no Reason for it, where there is no Evidence, or that Evidence not sufficient.

So that if it be asked, how a Person shall himself be satisfied concerning the Certainty of a Revelation made to him, it will receive the same Answer with that, How he shall be satisfied concerning the Truth of a Proposition, or a self-evident Proposition; for the further Proof of which God may work a Miracle, and give a Sign, but the Thing is the Proof of it self.

But however, suppose a Person never so well satisfied in what he calls Revelation, and that in his own Opinion he is as sure of it as of his own Being and Existence; yet what is this to others, that are concern'd in that Revelation, if it be true, and as much bound to believe it, and be directed by it, as if they themselves had been in the Place of that inspired Person, and received it, as he did, immediately from God?

This brings us to the Second Case.

2. The Case of those that did not themselves receive that Revelation immediately from God, but from the Person or Persons inspired: And then the Question is, How these are to judge of the Truth of that Revelation?

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A Revelation to another, how evidently and convincingly soever it may be represented to him, is nothing to me, unless I am fully assured that he has had such a Revelation: But that I cannot be assur'd of, unless it be by the like immediate Revelation, or by sufficient and uncontroulable Testimony. But it would be an unreasonable Motion to demand that we be alike inspired, and have the same Revelation to confirm his Revelation; for that would be as if one that was born blind should obstinately refuse to believe there is a Sun in the Firmament, or Day, or Sight, unless he has the same Visive Faculty with those that do affirm it. It might then as reasonably be required with *Thomas*, that we see the Print of the Nails, and put our Hand into the Side, and have all actually brought home to our Senses, or else we will remain Infidels, and not believe. This would be to drive all Faith out of the World, and so it would be unpracticable. Sermon III.

We must then take the Case for granted, and that it is as reasonable for us to believe, where there are sufficient Motives of Credibility, as if we were alike actually inspired as they to whom the Revelation was immediately conveyed.

And here let us place our selves in those Circumstances, as if we were to judge of the Truth or Falshood of a Revelation; and consider what we our selves would in reason desire

Sermon III.

desire for our own Satisfaction, when the Persons to whom this Revelation is made, stand ready to give it. And if I mistake not in judging for others by what I my self would desire, it may be resolved,

1. Into the Veracity, Sincerity, and Credibility of the Persons pretending to Inspiration.

2. Into the Matter or Subject of Revelation.

3. Into the Testimony produced for it.

1. The Credibility of the Person; by which we understand his Probity and Sincerity; his Capacity, Prudence, and Understanding, which render him worthy of Credit, and are meet and necessary Qualifications for a Divine Missionary. The being a Prophet to others, (as those are to whom a Revelation is made, and that are inspired by Almighty God) so as to teach and direct them, in the Stead, as it were, of God, whose Mouth and Representatives they are unto the People, is an Office of great Dignity, and requires somewhat of the Divine Image, as well as Authority, to recommend them and their Message to others; and therefore Prophets and Holy Men are in Scripture frequently put together, 2 *Pet.* 1. 21. *Matth.* 13. 17. implying that none were fit to be employed in so sacred an Office, that were not Persons of known

known Probity, and approv'd Integrity. I grant in the ordinary Cases, as there were Prophets bred up in the Schools or Nurseries of Learning and Morality, there might be such Persons as were employ'd without a strict Regard had to these Qualifications, as Messengers that carry'd an Errand by the Order of their Superior; as 2 *Kings* 9. 1. I grant again, that God might and did sometimes, upon some Occasions, inspire such Persons as had none of these Qualifications to recommend them; as he did *Balaam:* But then this was no more than when God open'd the Mouth of the Ass, to *rebuke the Madness of that Prophet*; and who was so over-rul'd by the Divine Power, as against his Will to bless those whom he came to curse; which was so much the more considerable, as it was the Testimony of an Enemy. Sermon III.

But as Revelation is a Divine Communication, and a Mark of Divine Favour, so it doth suppose, in the Nature of it, that the Person so dignified is duly qualified for it; and which is so requisite in the Opinion of Mankind, that without it he would rather be accounted an Impostor, than a Messenger from God, and ordinarily have no more Reverence paid to his Errand, than to his Person.

And what has been thus said in general, as to the Morality and Virtue of Persons inspir'd, will hold in some Degree as to their Prudence and Understanding, which is so necessary

Sermon III.

neceſſary a Qualification, that the Divine Election of Perſons for ſo peculiar a Service, doth in that way either find or make them fit.

Theol. Polit. c. 5.

It is no wonder that a late Author maintains Revelation to be uncertain, when he ſaith, That the Prophets were not endued with a more perfect underſtanding than others, but only with a more Vivid Power of Imagination; and that the Wiſeſt of Men, ſuch as *Solomon*, *Heman*, &c. were not Prophets, but, contrariwiſe, Ruſticks, and untaught Perſons, and even deſpicable Women, ſuch as *Hagar*.

For if theſe, and ſuch as theſe, were the only Perſons employ'd in the Meſſages of Heaven to Mankind, and whom all the Revelation center'd in, there would be no improbable Grounds of Suſpicion that they were miſled into ſuch an Opinion, by the Faſcination of a working Imagination, and ſo it would be Fancy, and not Revelation.

But what thinks he of *Moſes*, a Perſon acquainted with all the Learning of the *Egyptians*, and richly accompliſh'd with all Endowments requiſite to compleat a Governor of a Numerous People, and to conſolidate them into a ſettled Conſtitution; and therefore has the Preference given him to all the moſt Famous and Ancient Law-givers, by *Plato*, *Pythagoras*, *Diodorus Siculus*, &c.? What thinks he of *Joſhua*, that was bred up under the beſt Inſtructor, and that knew the Art of Government, and Conduct in Peace

Peace and War? What of *Samuel*, that from his Youth, and even Childhood indeed, commenced a Prophet, and was also the Judge of the whole Nation in unsettled and perilous Times, *Acts* 3. 24. 13. 20.? What of *David*, justly called a Prophet, *Acts* 2. 30. and whose Writings shew him to excell in all Manner of Poetry, and sublime Compositures? What, lastly, of *Solomon* himself, to whom, it's said, the Lord appeared twice, 1 *Kings* 11. 9. in a more eminent Manner; and at other Times, 1 *Kings* 3. 5. 6. 12. 9. 2. 11. 11.? And if at other Times God (who is not confined in his Choice or Operations to the Capacity of Instruments) was pleased to reveal himself to, and employ such Rusticks and illiterate Persons as *Amos*, and afterward the Apostles, he gave them *a mouth and wisdom*, Luke 21. 15. and endued them with such extraordinary Gifts of Elocution and Magnanimity, as made them fit to appear before Kings, and to confront the Wisest of Philosophers, so as that of the Apostle was abundantly verified in them, 1 Cor. 1. 25, *&c.* That *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*, &c. Sermon III.

But it is not only requisite that the Persons to whom the Revelation is made, and that are employ'd in delivering that Revelation to others, be wise and cautious, such as are capable of discerning, and not apt to be imposed upon; but it is as requisite that they

Sermon III.

be Faithful and Sincere, and that will not impose upon others. For otherwise the more knowing they are, the more able are they by plausible Insinuations and Pretences to deceive. And what greater Evidence of this can be desired, than when the Persons Inspired live by the best Rules, as well as give them? What greater Evidence, than when for the sake of publishing, propagating, and confirming the Truth of what they teach, they deny themselves of all the Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of this present Life; when though they knew before hand, that *bonds and tribulation abide them, yet none of these things move them, neither count they their lives dear unto them*; but with admirable Patience, Resolution, and Constancy, expose themselves to the utmost Severities, for the Hope of such Reward as they propose for their own, and the Encouragement of others? What greater Testimonies can be given of their Sincerity, and if not of the Truth, yet of their own Belief of it? Who could with such Chearfulness invite the greatest Dangers, and with such a brave Magnanimity despise all the Threatnings of the most Potent Adversaries, and run the Gantelope, as it were, through the most formidable Persecutions, without the least Demur or Hæsitation, if they themselves were not abundantly and fully convinced of the Truth, Excellency, and Necessity of that Doctrine they were thus commissioned to teach? If these

these are not sincere, there is no Sincerity in the World. Sermon III.

So that as far as the Credibility of the Persons is a Proof of a Revelation; and so far as the Wisdom, Probity, and Sincerity of Persons, are a Proof of their Credibility; we have an Evidence to rest upon, and a Character to try the Truth of a Revelation by.

The 2*d* Proof in this Case, desirable and necessary toward a Satisfaction, is the Subject-Matter of it; I mean that which runs as is a Vein through the whole Body of Revelation. There are some Revelations which concern particular Persons or Families, as that of the Angel to *Hagar* concerning *Ishmael* and his Posterity, which neither made her a Prophet, nor were strictly of Concernment to the rest of the World. But when we enquire after the Matter of Revelation, it is principally the main Subject of it, such as the Law of *Moses* in the Old Testament, and the Gospel in the New.

And here it may be reasonably expected, that the Revelation should be worthy of God, as it is a Revelation from him; and what should be for the Advantage, Satisfaction, and Happiness of Mankind, as it is a Revelation to them.

It is to be worthy of God, and what would become him to speak, dictate, and do, if he were himself to speak, dictate,

Sermon III.

and act. In all Relations and Descriptions there is a certain Decorum to be observed, with respect to the Nature, Condition, and Circumstances of the Things related and described, which makes up what is call'd Symetry and Proportion. But, above all, a due Regard is to be had hereunto, in the Ideas and Notions we entertain, or the Representations we make of God, that they may be agreeable to the Dignity and Perfections of his Nature. And if, in all our Conceptions of the Divine Being, such a scrupulous Care is to be taken that we judge not amiss of his Nature, Will, and Operations; we cannot but suppose that in the Revelation of himself to Mankind, he who best and only knows himself, will give such a Representation of those, as is suitable to his Majesty and Authority; and may ingenerate in the Minds of Men such an Awe, Reverence, and Regard, as is due from Finite, Created, and Imperfect Beings, to him that is Infinite, Uncreated, and in all Points absolutely Perfect. There we may well expect to find the most lively Characters of the Divine Perfections, as far as we are capable of conceiving; where Justice and Power are set forth in all their Authority, and yet so temper'd with his Mercy and Kindness, as shall as well raise and quicken the Hopes, attract the Love, and establish the Comfort of Good Men, as administer Matter of just Terror to the Wicked. There we may suppose

pose the Mysteries of the Divine Counsels unlocked, and the Beauties and Harmony of the Divine Providence illustrated and described, as far as God's Government of the World, and the Condition of Mankind in it will permit. There we may expect to find the best Principles, Rules, and Precepts, to inform and direct us in what we are to know and do; the best Arguments and Motives for our Encouragement, and the best Means for the purifying and the Perfecting of our Natures, and the making us as happy as we are capable; and which shall as much exceed what we find in the Moralists, as Revelation is above Nature, and the Dictates of Almighty God are beyond the Prescripts of Human Wisdom. Such, in fine, as will lead us to God, make us like him, and fit us for the Enjoyment of him. So that as much as Virtue makes for the Good, Perfection and Happiness of Men, so much should Revelation make for the Practice of Virtue by its Principles and Rules, its Precepts, and its Arguments. Sermon III.

Lastly, There we may expect to be satisfied about the chief Subjects of Human Enquiry, of what Mankind would not only desire, but what is best and most necessary for them to know. And what is there more Material, and of greater Importance, than to be satisfied about the Origine of all Things, and how they came at first to be? What more desirable, then since God is infinitely

Sermon III.

Good, and consequently could produce nothing that is in it self Evil, than to know how the Nature of Mankind came to be corrupted; and that where there is such a clear Sense of the Difference between Good and Evil, such Convictions following that Sense, such Memento's, and such Presignifications, such Reflections upon it, that there should be such a Potent Sway, Bent and Propension to Evil, that with all their Care it can never be prevented, or totally exterminated?

What more desirable, than to know what Nature and Reason of it self is insufficient, for [when we can get no further than a *Video meliora proboque*, &c. in the Apostle's Language, *The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do*] may be otherwise effected; that these Inclinations may be subdued, and Nature brought to a Regular State?

What more desirable, than to know how, after all, God may be appeased, Forgiveness may be obtained, and that heavy Load upon Human Nature, arising from the Guilt of a Man's Mind, may be removed?

Lastly, What more desirable, than to know the Certainty and Condition of a Future State, and how we may attain to the Happiness of it?

These, and the like, used to be the Prime Questions which all, and especially the most thoughtful and considerate Part of Mankind sought, but in vain, for Satisfaction in.

And

And therefore since Revelation is to make up the Defects of Natural Light, and is as well for the Satisfaction of Mankind, as to be worthy of God, we may reasonably expect that these should be the chief Subject of such Revelation.

And a Revelation without this, that should leave Mankind in the same Circumstances of Ignorance and Dissatisfaction as they were in before such Revelation, is no more to be esteem'd, than that Course of Physick, which, after all Pretences to Infallibility, leaves a Person as much under the Power of his Disease, as before he followed those Prescriptions; It is no Revelation, and can have no Pretence to such a Venerable Title.

But when the Subject is Great, Noble, and Sublime, thus worthy of God, and thus beneficial to Mankind: When there is an exact Concord between the Principles of Nature and Reason, and that all falls in with the true and just Notion we have of Things: When there is an Harmony through the whole, we have good Reason to say, This, if any, is the Revelation.

And as far as these Characters belong to Revelation, so much Reason have we to believe the Matter of Scripture to be such; as I shall afterwards shew, when I come to examine the Revelation of Scripture by these Characters.

3. It would be very desirable toward the Confirmation of a Revelation, and for the

Sermon III.

Satisfaction of those that are required to believe it, that there be an Evidence and Testimony as Extraordinary, as the Matter Revealed is, and the Authority it rests upon; such as the one is, such in Reason ought the other to be: And that is Divine Attestation. A Divine Attestation I account that to be, which exceeds the Power, and is out of the Road of Nature; for Nothing less can change the Course, and alter the Law of Nature, but that which is above Nature, and gave Law to it; and it must be somewhat above Nature, that can be a sufficient Witness to what is Supernatural. And this may justly be required to justify the Truth of a Revelation, and to distinguish it from Enthusiasm and Imposture. For when the Case is such as *Moses* puts it, *Exod.* 4. 1, &c. *They will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee*; there needs somewhat beyond a bare Affirmation, to support the Credit of the Revelation, and the Authority of him that pretends to it. And accordingly he was endued with a Power of working Miracles, *That*, saith the Text, *they may believe that the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appeared to thee.* A Sort of Evidence (as that implies) that is very necessary, and what may reasonably be demanded; and which is a Proof of the highest Nature, and what as all ordinarily can judge of, being a Matter of Sense, so where it is true, what we are to be concluded by.

The

Sermon III.

The first Thing then required, and to be considered, is the Reality of the Thing, That there is such an Alteration in the Course and State of Nature, which our own Senses will inform us in. The next Thing is, That this Alteration cannot proceed from any Natural or Created Cause; (for that would be to set Nature above it self.) The last Thing is, That this Alteration in Nature is brought about for such an End, and is solely for the Sake of that Revelation, and to give Testimony to it.

Where this is, there is the Finger of God, and an Infallible Proof of the Truth and Certainty of what it is to witness to.

Now let us lay all this together, and see what it amounts to; *viz.* The Capacity, Ability, and Integrity of the Persons to whom this Revelation is made; the Unanimity and Consent of Persons remote and distant in Time and Place; the Usefulness and Reasonableness, the Excellency, Sublimity, and Perfection of the Doctrine they taught; the Testimony given to them by such Operations and Productions as exceed the Power of Created Causes, and are wholly from the Supreme. Where these are concurring, and with one Mouth, as it were, giving in their Evidence, we may say it is the Voice of God, and that it is his Revelation which carries upon it the conspicuous Stamp of his Authority. For God cannot be supposed to bear witness to a Falshood,

Sermon III.

a Falſhood, and to ſet up that as a Light to direct Men in their Enquiry, which is no other than an *Ignis Fatuus*, and tends to their unavoidable Amuſement and Deception.

But ſuppoſing thoſe that were Cotemporaries with Inſpired Perſons, had all theſe concurring Evidences for their Satisfaction, yet what is this to thoſe that live in Times diſtant and remote from them, and have it only by Tradition of Perſons uninſpired; or as contain'd in certain Books ſaid to be wrote by Perſons inſpired?

This brings me to the laſt Point; which is,

3. The Caſe of thoſe that live in After-Ages, when Inſpiration is not pretended to, and Miracles have ceaſed, and ſo want thoſe Advantages for their Satisfaction, which they that were coetaneous with Inſpired Perſons might receive; and yet being obliged alike to believe as the other, muſt be ſuppoſed to have ſufficient Authority and Proof for what they are to believe. And then the Queſtion is, What is that Evidence which will be ſufficient for them to ground their Belief upon?

I anſwer, 1. That if ſuch have all the Evidence that can be in their Circumſtances, they have what is ſufficient, and what is to be preſumed neceſſary. The Evidence is ſufficient, if it proves there were Perſons ſo inſpired;

inſpired; that in Confirmation of it, they wrought Miracles; and that thoſe Perſons wrote certain Books which contain the Records of thoſe Revelations and Miracles; and which Books are the ſame that now go under their Name. Sermon III.

And if they have all the Evidence for this that in their Circumſtances can be reaſonably demanded, they have that which is ſufficient. And what Evidence can be given of Matters tranſacted 1600 Years ago, but Teſtimony, and what is uſually called Moral Evidence? A way of Proof that is as certain as that we our ſelves were born, and born of ſuch Parents, at ſuch a time; and that there is any ſuch Thing as Faith and Truſt in Mankind.

2. Though theſe of After-Ages want the Evidence thoſe Cotemporaries of Inſpired Perſons had; yet they have ſome Advantages above them. For they have not only the concurrent Evidence of all before them, and the Reaſons of their Judgment that have been downwards from thoſe Times, the moſt conſiderable Part of Mankind for Wiſdom and impartial Conſideration; but having lived to ſee the whole Scheme of Revelation compleated, and at once placed in their View,

1. They can by that means compare one Part with the other, and ſee how all agrees, and makes up one entire and coherent Body.

2. They

Sermon III.

2. They can compare the Events already paſs'd, with the Predictions, and ſee how all came on, and in their ſeaſon are fulfilled, and how the former is ſtill confirm'd by the latter. In all which, there appears an admirable Contrivance of the Divine Preſcience, in deſcribing thoſe Things ſo long beforehand, and of the Divine Wiſdom and Power in carrying on the Prophetick Line through all the Stages of Second Cauſes, and an Infinite Variety of Events, to the laſt Moment of its Accompliſhment; and to all which, a watchful Providence of the Almighty muſt conſtantly attend.

3. They have ſeen the wonderful Succeſs of the Goſpel in Verification of Prophecy; and notwithſtanding all the Oppoſition made to it by the Power and Intereſt of the World, back'd with the Venom, Spite, and Malice of inveterate Enemies.

4. They have ſeen the Wonderful Preſervation of it through all the various Scenes of Proſperity and Adverſity; and how miraculouſly it has been reſtored out of the loweſt Abyſs, when ſeemingly, and as to all outward Appearance, beyond Recovery.

So that we ſee, how in every Caſe there are Ways chalked out for our Satisfaction in this Argument of a Divine Revelation; the Caſe of Latter Ages not excepted.

And therefore that Unbelief is now as inexcuſable after the Times of Revelation, as in thoſe Times. We are apt to think, and

ſome-

ſometimes to plead. That if we had lived in the Apoſtolical Age, when the Revelation was attended with the irrefragable Teſtimony of many Glorious Miracles; we ſhould then have been inexcuſable, if we had remained incredulous amidſt thoſe Inſtances of the Divine Power, or impenitent under the Force of ſuch convincing Arguments; and that the want of theſe may juſtly be pleaded for our Excuſe. But this is much like thoſe *Jews*, *Matth.* 23, 30. that ſaid, *If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets*; when yet they were acted by the ſame Spirit. And I may ſay, Thoſe that believe not now under all the Motives of Credibility, would not have believ'd, any more than the *Jews* did, that were Eye and Ear-Witneſſes of our Saviour's Miracles and Doctrine, and yet remained to the laſt Incredulous. Such are incurable; for if they hear not *Moſes* and the Prophets, the Teſtimonies yet remaining, neither would they be perſuaded, though Chriſt and the Apoſtles roſe from the dead, and the whole proceſs of that Teſtimony given by them, was afreſh repreſented to them. The beſt Man is the beſt Judge; and the better he is, the more capable he is of Judging; according to that memorable Saying of our Saviour, *John* 7. 17. *If any man will do the will of God, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of my ſelf.*

Sermon III.

Where-

Sermon III.

Wherefore (to conclude with that of the Apostle, *James* 1. 21.) *lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness* [and humility] *the ingrafted word, which is able to save your Souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

SER-

SERMON IV.

HEB. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.

IN theſe Words, there is contain'd, (as I have before ſhewed)

I. A Deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking.*

II. The *Certainty* of it; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at ſundry times,* &c.

III. The Order obſerved in delivering this Revelation; it was *at ſundry times,* &c.

IV. The Perfection and Concluſion of all, 'tis *in theſe laſt days by his Son.*

Under

Sermon IV.

Under the Second I have ſhewed,

1. That God has actually revealed his Will *at ſundry times, and in divers manners.*

2. What are the Characters of true Revelation.

3. I am now in order to prove, that the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Teſtament* do contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

For the better diſpoſing of what I have to ſay under this Head of Diſcourſe, I ſhall obſerve,

1. 'Tis one Thing to aſſert and prove the Matter of Scripture to be true, and another to prove it to be of Divine Revelation.

2. 'Tis one Thing to prove the Matter of Scripture to be of Divine Revelation, and another to prove theſe Books to be of Divine Inſpiration.

3. 'Tis one Thing to aſſert that there were once ſuch Books ſo inſpired; and another Thing to prove this Set of Books, which now make up and compoſe the Canon of the Old and New Teſtament, to be thoſe very Books.

From hence ariſe four Queſtions, *viz.*

Queſt. 1. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be true?

Q. 2. How

Sermon IV.

Q. 2. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be of Divine Revelation? Books of mere Human Compoſition may contain nothing but Truth, without any Supernatural Aſſiſtance; and therefore though we were never ſo well able to maintain and prove the Truth of the Matter, that is not ſufficient, unleſs we can advance higher, and prove the Authority and Divinity of the Matter.

Q. 3. How we can prove thoſe Books to be of Divine Inſpiration? The Epiſtle of *Clemens Romanus* was ſometime read in the Church (as the *Apocrypha* anciently was, and is now with us), becauſe of the Excellency and Profitableneſs of the Matter; but yet it was not eſteemed to be Canonical, and of immediate Inſpiration from God.

Q. 4. How we prove theſe Books, that are now extant, and received by the Chriſtian Church as Canonical, to be thoſe Books which were once in time paſt wrote by Inſpiration from God?

It will be of ſome Uſe to us in the Proſecution of this Argument, to conſider the firſt Queſtion, concerning the Truth of the Matter of Scripture, by it ſelf, and apart from the Divine Authority of it.

Now the Matter of Scripture is of various Nature, ſuch as Morality, Doctrinal Revelation, Inſtitution, Prophecy and Hiſtory, of which, the greateſt Part will be here ſet

Sermon IV.

aſide: For it is not neceſſary to prove the Truth of the Moral Part of it, which is no other than the Dictate of Nature; and therefore, though explain'd, confirm'd, and illuſtrated in Scripture by many uſeful Rules, Principles and Obſervations, needs no Proof.

That of Doctrine and Inſtitution, falls in with the Divine Authority, and ſo belongs to the Second Queſtion.

Prophecy, if yet to be accompliſh'd, is not capable of other Proof than Revelation; and if already fulfilled, by the Event following, and correſpondent to the Prediction, it is the Proof of it ſelf.

So that the Part now remaining to be proved more eſpecially, is Scripture-Hiſtory; which is a Relation of Matter of Fact, of what has happened, been declared, or done in the ſeveral Periods and Ages of the World for Four thouſand Years together, and upwards.

Under which Notion, I do not queſtion but it may be made appear, That there is more to be ſaid for the Truth of Scripture-Hiſtory, than for any thing of that kind in the whole World.

I don't queſtion again, but it may be made appear, that no Authors had greater Advantages for Information, in the Subjects they treat of; nor were there ever any Writings that bore upon them more ample Marks of Ability, Impartiality, and Care. So that if after all *that* is to be ſuſpected, nothing

nothing of that Kind is certain, and we call in queſtion all Matters of the like nature whatſoever. Sermon IV.

But this is further to be inquired into.

Now of this Kind, there are ſome Things to be found only in Scripture, and no where elſe. In which Caſe we have no other way to judge of the Truth of it, than by the Credibility of the Matter, the Self-Agreement, its Concordance with Time, Place, and other Circumſtances of Action, together with the Credit and Reputation of the Pen-men of it.

But there are other Things which fall in with other Writings; and then beſides the former way of Trial, we are to have recourſe to ſuch Books, to compare them, and determine concerning the Truth by ſuch a Compariſon.

So that we have Three Sorts of Proof before us, or ſo many Characters by which we may judge concerning the Truth of what the Scripture relates: *Viz.*

1. The Credibility of the Matter therein revealed.
2. Self-Conſiſtence, and Self-Agreement.
3. Its Concordance with other Books of good and ſufficient Authority; where ſuch there are.

Sermon IV.

And if this be made out, we have as much Evidence for the Truth of Scripture as is poſſible to have in our Circumſtances; and where the Matters related were tranſacted in Place and Time far remote from us. For all the Evidence we can have, is to be reſolved into Teſtimony, and that Teſtimony into the Credibility of the Relators, or of the Matters related: And if we have as much Evidence of this kind as the nature of the Thing will bear and admit, we have as much as is reaſonable in it ſelf, and ſufficient to ground a Certainty upon. For according as the Nature of the Thing is, and the Ground upon which its Proof and Evidence depends, ſuch is the Certainty: And as in Things Mathematical, Demonſtration is the Proof; And in Things Natural and Senſible, Senſe is the Proof; and in Things Rational and Moral, Reaſon and Argument are the Proof; ſo in Matters of Fact (where we our ſelves are not preſent) Teſtimony and Records are the Proof; though, for a further Confirmation of it, there is the collateral Proof of Moral Evidence, *viz.* the Credibility of the Matter, and the Perſons, into whoſe Teſtimony and Veracity the the Matters are finally reſolved. And beyond this we cannot go, in the Evidence for the Truth of the Matters of Fact; and conſequently, if we have this Evidence, we have as great a Certainty in Things of this Nature, as Demonſtration is in Things Mathe-

Mathematical, and Senſe in Things ſenſible; I ſay, beyond this we cannot go, unleſs we advance to Supernatural Evidence; but that belongs not to this Place. Sermon IV.

So that here we have no Reaſon to doubt; and where there is no Reaſon to doubt, there is Certainty. And if we can be certain of any Thing we our ſelves have not ſeen, or been preſent at, we may be certain of what is recorded in the Scripture: Since there is no Evidence for any thing of that Kind, which we have not for the Truth of Scripture; and I may ſay, we have that Evidence for it, which no Matters of Fact beſides have. If then there be any Certainty in ſuch Things, if any Credit be to be given to them; then there is here a ſufficient Evidence to ground that Certainty, and our Belief of it upon: And if there be no Certainty in them, and no Ground to believe them; then there is no Certainty in the World, and no Credit to be given to whatever is, or has been allowed by others in the World: Then there is no more Credit to be given to the Commentaries of *Cæſar*, (which he wrote himſelf) nor to the Hiſtories of the Four Empires, nay to thoſe of our own Nation, than there is to *Achilles*, *Tatius*, or *Heliodorus*, than to the vaineſt Romances, the Fables of Poets, or the Legends of the moſt Superſtitious and Credulous Ages of the World.

And with all our Hiſtories, though ne-

Sermon IV.

ver so famed, and commonly receiv'd, we are in no better a Condition, than if *Varro*'s *fabulous and obscure Age* had been continued, and all the Ages were now this Day what it was before the *Olympiads*, wrapt up in Invention and Conjecture.

But if there be any Credit to be given to such Memorials, and that we read approved Histories with another sort of Appetite and Assurance than we do Fables; and that we read *Lucan* (a Poetical Historian) with another sort of Relish than *Ovid*'s *Metamorphoses*; then the like Credit is to be given to the Scriptures as to any; and so much the more, as the Evidence proper to its Kind is beyond the Evidence we have for any other Writings whatsoever.

And this I shall undertake and prosecute, by proving,

1. That the Scripture has sufficient Evidence of that Kind to ground a Certainty upon.

2. That it has all the Evidence that any Writings or Matters of this Kind have, and more.

In order to which, it may well serve as an Introduction to what is to follow, briefly to reflect upon the Writers themselves, and their Qualifications; upon whose Credit and Authority there must be confessedly sometimes an absolute Reliance. Since the Rela-

Relators of Matters of Fact profeſs not to write out of their own Heads, but to receive what they write from a conſtant and uninterrupted Tradition, or to collect from the beſt Records and Memorials, or to ſet down what is of their own Knowledge and Obſervation: And therefore the Reputation of their Reports and Narratives doth very much depend upon their Skill and Judgment, that they be not abuſed by falſe Informations, and upon their Honeſty and Integrity in not putting Abuſes upon the World. Sermon IV.

As for the Ways of Information, there is nothing of that Kind wanting in the Sacred Pen-men. For the firſt Writer, *Moſes*, lived ſo near upon the Traditionary Age, and the Things he writes of are of ſuch a Nature, as may well be ſuppoſed to be deliver'd down without any Difficulty from Progenitors to Poſterity, had there been no other Means of Conveyance; and eſpecially (as has been before ſuggeſted, *Sermon* II.) if we conſider the few Hands they were to paſs through, when at the moſt Eight Perſons only in Succeſſion continued the Line above Two thouſand five hundred Years, from the Deluge to the Time of *Moſes*; and that the Matters were ſuch as all thoſe held themſelves concerned to deliver them down as they had received them. Foraſmuch as all the Prophecies they had received, which concerned the good of Mankind, and of their Poſterity, depended upon the careful and

Sermon IV.

faithful Preſervation of theſe Memorials; both as to Time and Pedigrees, as well as the Matters which the Series of Times and Deſcents were to be the great Supporters of.

From hence it was afterwards that theſe Chronological Tables, and Genealogical Rolls, were in all Times exactly kept, and which upon Occaſion they might have recourſe to; and that there were Annals in future Ages that were look'd upon as Sacred Repoſitories; and from whence the Holy Writers drew their Materials, and to which they do refer, as may be obſerved in the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*.

But if we add hereunto, that a great Part of what is the Subject of of Holy Writ, was what the Writers themſelves had the Perſonal Knowledge of, bore a part in, and what happen'd in their own Times; it gives the greater Authority to what they have written. And this was the Caſe of *Moſes* as to the Four laſt of his Books; of *Joſhua*, of *Samuel*, of the Prophets, and of the Evangelical Writers. So that if we will grant any Thing to be allowed to Tradition, to Records of Ages, to Reports of Eye and Ear-Witneſſes, there is the higheſt Credit to be given to the Divine Authors, in what they have collected and made Report of. And what has been done with ſo much Faithfulneſs, Impartiality, and Judgment, (as their Compoſures teſtify) that even that which tends to the Diſparagement of their Nation

and

and Anceſtors, their Families and Perſons, is not conceal'd, when it might tend to the Glory of God, to the Manifeſtation of the Reaſons of the Divine Proceedings towards them, or the giving any Life to the Matters they relate. A Practice rarely to be obſerved in other Authors; and when it is, doth give Credit to what they report. Sermon IV.

But the chief Thing is the Credibility of the Matter (which I ſhall now proceed to).

I. The Credibility of the Matter, which is a ſtanding Character that we are to judge of the Truth of a Relation by.

But then we muſt judge aright concerning the Credibility of it. For that at firſt Sight may ſeem to be incredible, which upon farther Conſideration and Examination may prove to be Credible: As St. *Paul* ſaith to *Agrippa*, Acts 26. 8. *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you that God ſhould raiſe the dead?* It might ſeem a Thing incredible at the firſt Propoſal, as it did to the *Athenians*, *Acts* 17. 32. but the Apoſtle ſtates the Caſe right, 1. *Cor.* 15. 35. in Anſwer to that Queſtion, *Some Man will ſay, How are the dead raiſed up, and with what Body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou ſoweſt is not quickned except it dye. And that which thou ſoweſt, thou ſoweſt not that Body that ſhall be, but God giveth it a Body*, &c. Where he firſt of all confirms it by a like Inſtance in Nature, and then reſolves it into the Power of God.

'Tis

Sermon IV.

'Tis for want of these Two Considerations, that is, of the Understanding of Nature, the Order, Power, and Operation of Second Causes; and of the Power of God, the Supreme Cause, that we often mistake about the Credibility of Things; and judge that to be Impossible and Incredible, which in it self, and often in the Event, proves to be Possible and Credible.

And thus it frequently fares in Matters of Fact, of the Credibility or Incredibility of which, we are as liable to mistake, as about the Possibility or Impossibility of Effects in Nature; when we judge of other Nations and Ages by our own, and of what we do not know, by what we do, and sometimes are so vain as to reason against others Experience and Observation. Thus it was with the Ancients, that thought the Torrid-Zone Uninhabitable; and with others, that accounted the Opinion of Antipodes Fabulous and Impossible. Hence it is that the Errors of former Writers are so often corrected by Modern Observations. But this we may confidently affirm of the Holy Scripture, that after it has stood the Test of above Three thousand Years in Whole or in Part, (for so long is it since the Time of *Moses*) and that nothing has been left unattempted by its Adversaries to overthrow its Authority, it has yet maintained it, so as to be the most Exact, Faithful, and Impartial Relation the World ever had.

For

For the better judging of whose Veracity, and confirming its Credibility, we may observe; Sermon IV.

1. That a great Part of it carries with it its own Evidence, and has the common Consent of Mankind to attest it. Such I account the History of the Creation of the World, the Formation of Man, and the Degeneracy of Human Nature to be. The first of these was universally acknowledg'd; nor was the Creation of the World ever questioned or disputed, till above a thousand Years after the Time of *Moses* (as *Aristotle*, who was of that Opinion, acknowledges, *de Cœlo*, *lib.* 1. *cap.* 10.) And the last was the Observation of all Ages.

2. There is a Relation of such Things in Scripture, as have in them the Face and Appearance of Truth; and of which, no certain or tolerable Account can be given by any other Monuments of History that are, or ever were extant in the World. Such are the Age of the World; the Dispersion of Nations; the Variety of Languages; the Distribution of Time, *&c.*

Now if the Account given of these Things in Scripture be True, we are capable of solving the greatest Difficulties as to these Matters. And that they are True, there is good Reason to conclude. As for Instance, let us consider the Instances before given, *viz.*

(1.) The

Sermon IV.

(1.) The Origine of the World as it in *Geneſis*. I acknowledge there may be nothing in the Compoſition of it, or in the Courſe of Nature, to determine this Point more in Favour of *Moſes*, than of the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, or *Chineſe*. But to lay aſide all other Arguments from the Novelty of Arts and Sciences, and the reputed Inventors of them; it is certain that in the Account given by *Moſes* there is an exact Order, the Narration begins and is carried on with a ſtrict Coherence; and let us trace it back from the Flood to *Adam*; or from *Abraham* (ſuppoſe) to the Flood, there is a very regular Relation of Perſons and Things. But beſides the Incredibility of the other, of the Thouſands of the *Egyptians*, the Hundred thouſands of the *Chaldeans*, and the Millions of the *Chineſes*; it all ends at laſt in Fable, in Apotheoſes, or imaginary Gods and Heroes, and Self-Contradictions (as has been ſhewn by many Learned Writers on this Argument).

(2.) As to the Diſperſion of Nations, and the Conſequents of it, the Pedigree of *Moſes* is juſtified in the Names of Places agreeing with thoſe of the Perſons; as has been abundantly proved by *Bochart* in his *Geographia Sacra*. And which would appear to the Eye of every Reader, if a Table was made of the Tenth Chapter of *Geneſis*, and compared with the Ancient Geography; and ſhould have been here inſerted, were there a Place for it.

(3.) As to the Diſtribution of Time, there

there is an orderly Progreſſion, both with Reſpect to the Genealogies of Families, and the ſeveral Periods from the Creation to the Flood, from thence to the Law at *Sinai*, from thence to the rearing of *Solomon*'s Temple, from thence to the Captivity, and from that to our Saviour's Death. Time and Place are good Characters of the Truth of any Matter of Fact, as well as good Marks and Directors; and carry in them a great Appearance of Truth where they are to be found. And then none can be preſumed to be more certain than the Scripture, where the Relation theſe had to the Meſſiah, and each Perſon had to his Tribe, and each Tribe to its Place and Scituation, made the *Jews* to be ſcrupulouſly Exact and Critical. Sermon IV.

3. There are other Things that are highly Credible, and have nothing difficult to be admitted; and if admitted, are a wonderful Inſtance of the Divine Providence: As in the Puniſhment of profligate and incorrigible Wickedneſs, in the Two Notorious Examples of the Deluge and *Sodom*; 2 *Pet.* 2. 5, 6: So in the Preſervation of Pious Perſons, ſuch as *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Lot*, *Joſeph*, *David*, &c.

But above all is this, evident in God's erecting, eſtabliſhing, guiding and preſerving his Church, when in *Egypt*, in *Canaan*, though perpetually ſurrounded with watchful and malicious Adverſaries; and recovering ſo much of it out of Captivity as was ſufficient in a continued Succeſſion to anſwer the End of accom-

Sermon IV.

accomplishing all the Scripture Prophecies in the Person of the *Messiah*, that was to descend from the Lineage of *Abraham*, the Tribe of *Judah*, and the Family of *David*.

So that as the Ancient Genealogies, together with the Chronology of Scripture, were carefully recorded, to demonstrate to succeeding Generations that the World had a Beginning, and a late Beginning in Comparison: So the later Genealogies from *Abraham* were very exactly preserved, that so it might appear to all the World, that what had been foretold above 1800 Years before, was in its Order and Time punctually fulfilled: Which if the Genealogies had been lost or confounded, could not have been observed; and so we had been wanting in a considerable Evidence of the Descent of our Saviour, and consequently of his being the *Messiah*.

Indeed the whole Scripture History is little else than the History of Divine Providence; where there is an admirable Concatenation of Relations of various Kinds, but all subservient to the same End; and were there an Extract made of it, and all the Events therein rehearsed, and Operations therein described, brought into one entire Body, it would be the best Commentary on that Divine Subject in the whole World, and infinitely beyond any Human Composure.

4. There are other Things that are difficult, either as to the Relations themselves,

or the Manner and Circumstances of them; but what should no more prejudice us against the Truth and Certainty of the Things related, and much less of the Whole, than the Difficulties of Divine Providence should warrant us to deny it, and for want of not understanding some of its Operations, or Events, we should take Encouragement to deny what we do understand. 'Tis an excellent Saying of St. *Austin*, *De Doctrina*, l. 4. c. 6. (speaking of the Divine Writers) "Where I do "understand them, there is nothing seems "to me more wisely or more eloquently ex- "pressed: But where I do not understand "them, there to me appears less of their "Eloquence; but yet I do not doubt it to be "such, as it is where I understand it.

Sermon IV.

We ought rather to suspend our Censure with the Modesty of this Father, and for the sake of what we do understand, think the more favourably of what we do not.

And therefore, as when we have uncontroulable Reason to believe a Providence, the Difficulties about it are no sufficient Reason to call the Doctrine of Divine Providence into question: So when we have so great Reason to believe the Scripture's Relation of Things to be true, the Difficulties about it ought not to derogate from its Veracity; nor give us the Confidence any more to question the Truth of Scripture, than the Certainty of Providence. For by this Way of Proceeding, not only the Truth of Scripture,

but

Sermon IV.

but of all other Books whatſoever will be overthrown; nay the plaineſt and moſt obvious Appearances in Nature. And yet of this Kind are many of the Objections that are brought into the Field, and are made to ſerve in the Cauſe of Impiety: Such as theſe;

Theol. Polit. c. 7.

"That we don't know into whoſe Hands "thoſe Books have fallen, nor in what Co- "pies ſuch various Readings have been "found; or whether there are not more "of that Kind in other Hands.

The Iſſue of all which is, That if this will invalidate the Truth of Scripture, it will alſo invalidate that of all Writings whatſoever; and ſo is no more to be regarded than an Argument againſt Motion, which is rather to be contemned than anſwered.

'Tis but reaſonable then that we ſhould give the ſame Quarter to the Scripture, that we allow to other Writings. And therefore all Objections levell'd againſt the Scriptures, which will equally be managed againſt any others, ought not to be allowed, unleſs we will give Credit to nothing but what we our ſelves hear and ſee: And then to carry on the Cauſe, we muſt recede again, ſince there are thouſands of Caſes happen, where even our own Senſes may be ſubject to Error and Miſtake.

II. Another Character for the Proof or Diſcovery of the Truth of Hiſtory, is Self-Conſiſtence and Agreement.

This

This is a neceſſary Character, and abſolutely requiſite to all true Hiſtory; for nothing more ſhews the Weakneſs and Injudiciouſneſs of a Writer, than that he comprehends not his own Deſign; and 'tis a ſign he doth not comprehend it, that contradicts himſelf, and makes one Part to diſagree with another.

I grant that this alone is not an infallible Character of Truth, that it is Self-conſiſtent; for where the Plot is wholly fictitious and imaginary, there may be an exact Agreement throughout the Whole: The Model may be ſo regularly ſquared and laid out, that there may be a becoming Symetry; and Place, and Time, and all Circumſtances made to concur, to ſet it off with the greater Advantage. But though this may be, where Truth is not, yet that cannot be true, which is without it, Truth being always conſiſtent with it ſelf. But there is this above all others obſervable in Scripture, That it is a Syſtem of ſeveral Books, wrote by ſeveral Perſons, in ſeveral Ages, on ſeveral Subjects; and yet, however different in Stile and Phraſe, Method and Order, are like the ſeveral Features in the Face, that beſides the Sweetneſs in each alone, there is what we call Beauty, that ariſes from the Mixture of all.

Thus it is in the Sacred Hiſtory, which has a great Variety in it of Matter, diſper-

Sermon IV.

fed up and down sometimes to quicken the Appetite, and excite the Diligence of the Reader, where each has its Order and Use: But when considered in one complex Body, and compared and shewn together, there is such a wonderful Agreement between the *Old Testament* and the *New*, the Types and Anti-Types, the Predictions and the Events, *&c.* that it makes a very beauteous, lively, and admirable Appearance, without any such Inconsistencies as may make it liable to have its Veracity questioned, if duly consider'd, and seriously examined.

I say, if duly consider'd, and seriously examined; for else it must be acknowledged, that there are some Appearances of this kind.

1. But I account not those to be Inconsistencies, which in other Authors may justly be esteemed Errors of the Transcribers; and for which no Author suffers in his Reputation. As for Instance, when the famous Historian *Herodotus* in one Place saith, That *Homer* lived about 400 Years before his Time; and in another Place, That it was about 600. This Escape doth not lessen his Reputation among judicious Persons; but for all that, he preserves the Character of *Pater Historiarum*, and is esteemed as no injudicious or careless Writer. And so if a greater Number in Scripture is taken for a less, or a less for a greater, when there are sufficient

Euterpe. c. 53, Vita Hom.

sufficient Directions therein for the Correction of it; 'tis not reasonable to charge this as an Inconsistency, and to urge it as a Reason for the overthrowing the Credit and Veracity of it. Sermon IV.

If it be said, How doth it appear that they are the Faults of the Transcriber?

I answer, 'Tis apparently so sometimes, as may be observed in the various Readings; which could not be, were there not such Mistakes in the Transcriber: And where it doth not appear so to be, we ought in Reason so to judge, where there are all the Appearances of Faithfulness, Diligence and Observation in the Writers themselves. As for Instance, what can be more exactly penn'd than the Book of *Joshua*, in which there is a punctual Account of the Situation and Bounds of each Tribe, as it was set out and describ'd by *Joshua* himself, the Chief Arbiter and Director of all; and if there should be found in his Book any Literal Errors, one Name put for another, or a different Reading of the same Names, we cannot in Reason judge it to be an Oversight of so sufficient and so careful a Writer, but that it might proceed from some one that transcribed it after the Αυτογραφον, or Original Copy, in some successive Generations, and which in Reason 'tis impossible wholly to prevent.

'Tis not here necessary for me to enter upon a Debate, how far the Providence of

Sermon IV.

God doth herein concern it ſelf in preſerving the Text free from all Corruptions: I am now treating upon this Argument, humanly ſpeaking, and of the Truth of it ſeparately from its Divine Authority. And admitting there are ſuch petty Errors, that creep in by ſuch imperceptible Ways, though we cannot tell when or how they came in, and have been diſſeminated into all Copies, for ought we know, that are extant; yet I don't know any Reaſon why they ſhould be charged upon the Original, and the Compiler of it; nor how the main Cauſe is herein concern'd.

It is a Reſpect due and given to all Authors of any Repute for their Care and Fidelity, that write conſiſtently as to the Main, to paſs the moſt favourable Conſtruction upon any ſuch little Errors; which if theirs, were not voluntary; or rather not to make them theirs, without an apparent Neceſſity for it.

And ſurely we ſhould not then preſs the Caſe with the utmoſt Severity, and make that, which is in it ſelf, and in all Books beſides, a Venial Error, to be no leſs than a Mortal one in the Scripture, and to ſtab its Veracity to the Heart, and ſpoil its Credit for ever for the future.

If it be ſaid, there is more Reaſon for this in the Caſe of Scripture than in any other Book; becauſe That alone pretends to Divine Authority:

I an-

Sermon IV.

I anſwer, That for the preſent is not the Matter under Conſideration; we are now upon the Point of its Truth, and content our ſelves to enter upon this Debate, as if it had no Pretence to Divine Authority and Inſpiration.

And ſo we claim the ſame Favour and Right on its Behalf, as we do for any other Author's Credit and Repute, of great Antiquity and general Reception.

And therefore there ought no ſuch Arguments or Objection to be urg'd for the Invalidity of its Authority, which it is not decent or reaſonable to offer againſt other Writings; and we may reaſonably claim the ſame Allowance for that, which all Mankind do give, or in Reaſon ought to give, in Things of this Nature.

2. I don't account theſe to be Inconſiſtencies or Contradictions, which do not affect the main Body or Part of the Hiſtory; but that are like a Parentheſis in a Sentence, that whether inſerted or omitted, the Sence is perfect and compleat. And therefore when the Hiſtory of *Jacob* bleſſing his Sons is the Subject under Conſideration; whether it was, as *Gen.* 47. 31. *He bowed himſelf upon the beds head*; or, as *Heb.* 11. 21. *He worſhipped ----- upon the top of his ſtaff*; is not material.

And ſo it may be in many Caſes beſides; but what real Prejudice will redound to the Reader by the Miſtake of any Thing of this

Sermon IV.

kind or what Prejudice is there to the Relation, when a Thing of no Moment is omitted or inserted, exchanged or altered? I say not this as if I despaired of having an Account given of these Matters, (for that I am sensible is to be done, as in the Case before-recited) but to shew how unreasonable it is to condemn Scripture for that which we will let others go away with, free from all Blame and Censure; and they shall be good and laudable Writers, and their Histories admitted to be true and exact, though they have many Errors of this kind; and in the mean while the other shall be sifted to the very bottom, and every Mole-hill be a Mountain; and upon every little supposed Defect, it shall be said, *It has been weighed in the ballance* of Reason and Examination, and has been *found too light.*

Thus partial are these sort of Persons, while they malevolently lay the Right hand upon the youngest, and their Left upon the eldest.

If indeed the Inconsistency were like a Disease in the Vitals, that affects the Heart or the Brain, it is to be accounted Mortal; if it did affect the main Body of the Relation, and had originally proceeded from the Author, it would have been a just Allegation, and his Truth and Fidelity, his Knowledge and his Care, might with good Reason be call'd in question. But that we deny; and appeal to all the various Readings

and

and Obſervations on Scripture as our Compurgators in this Point. And conſequently the Scripture will ſo far remain as a true Relater of Matters of Fact, and may compare with, and be deſervedly ſet above all other Writings whatſoever; in which no one Man, whoſe Hand paſſed through the whole Work, can compare with that to which ſo many Hands in various Circumſtances, at ſeveral Times, did ſo exactly concur and agree, as if they had been wrote by one Hand, and at one Time, and were but one entire Argument running through the whole. Sermon IV.

III. Another Character is the Agreement of Scripture with other Authors; when ſuch there are.

I may well ſay, When ſuch there are:

Since it is evident that there are no Writers can pretend to the like Antiquity with *Moſes*; and then we muſt wholly rely on his Authority for what he relates. But however, though the moſt ancient among the Heathens are much later than him, and ſo wanted thoſe Advantages for Information which he had; yet they (ſo far as they agree with him) give a Confirmation and Credibility to what he relates, ſince they deliver it as the Senſe of the Ages before, and of thoſe in which they themſelves lived. It is not here ſo much to our Purpoſe to enquire from whence they deriv'd

Sermon IV.

the Knowledge of the Things they relate, whether from the *Jews*, or from the general Tradition (which was beſt to be known from the Eaſtern Parts of the World) as it is to obſerve their Concurrence in them with the Sacred Writers. It is indeed probable, that the ancient Writers of the Heathens were (if at all) leſs beholding to the *Jews* for their Information, and the later more; as may be obſerved from the great Difference between the one and the other, the later being much plainer in many Things than the former: For the higher we aſcend from the Time of the Olympiads, the more intricate, obſcure, and fabulous they are. So that, generally ſpeaking, it is with them as *Plutarch* ſaith of Geographers, That rather than leave any vacant Places in their Maps, fill them up with inacceſſible Mountains, Frozen Seas, or Monſters. So when ſuch Hiſtorians would compleat their Narratives, rather than be deficient in it, they inſert wonderful and tragical Stories; and like Nations that can give no Account of their Pedigree and Original, derive themſelves from the Gods, or from the Earth, and become *Aborigines*.

But however, though this be too truly the State of the World for about 3000 Years from the Creation, yet there is a mixture of fine Gold with the greater Droſs; and from whence we may extract ſo much as may ſerve to confirm what the Scripture advances

vances for Truth, and we for the Sake of it receive as such; as might be shewn. Sermon IV.

This is a Tract has been often beaten by Ancients and Moderns; by *Aristobulus* and *Josephus* among the *Jews*; by several of the Fathers, such as *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, *Eusebius*, &c. and by many in these Days. *Bochart*, *Huetius*, *Dr. Stillingfleet*, *&c.* And it were easy to form a History out of them; especially if we change but their Names, and instead of *Saturn*, read *Adam*; instead of *Pandora*, *Eve*; instead of the Garden of *Jupiter*, *Eden*; instead of *Ogyges* or *Deucalion*, *Noah*, &c. for we should find more of the Truth under the disguise of the Fable than at the first appears; and that the former gave Occasion frequently to the later.

But over and above this, we have a great Part of the ancient History of Scripture confirm'd by the express Testimony of some of their gravest and strictest Writers, as the Collection, that has been made in that way by several of the Learned, shews. To go no further than that of *Moses*, who is plac'd by some of them in the first Rank of the chiefest Lawgivers, and whose Wonders in *Egypt*, and at the *Red-Sea*, are not obscurely referr'd to by them.

IV. When there is a Disagreement between the Scripture and other Authors, there is sufficient Reason to prefer the former before the later, and to rectify these by that. As for the first 3000 Years, it is acknowledged,

Sermon IV.

ledged, That there was elsewhere little less than Fable and Conjecture, Confusion and uncertain Tradition, as has been before observed: And who is there that is not able to see the Difference between an *Adam* and a *Saturn*, a *Noah* and *Bacchus*, a *Moses* and *Mercury*; between the Building of the *Babylonish* Tower, and the War of the Giants with the Gods; that is, between the true History and the Fable?

Who can observe the various Accounts amongst the Pagan Writers, their Inconsistencies one with another, their apparent Ignorance of what they write about, especially when it concerns other Nations or Ages, than those in which themselves liv'd, but must needs surrender up the Cause, and own that the one has much the Advantage of the other in point of Credibility?

So that setting aside the Divine Authority of Scripture, yet it has upon it all the Characters of Truth, which any Book or Books in the World can pretend: And if there be any thing necessary more than what those have to establish its Certainty and Credibility, that is not wanting. In conclusion, After all the Attempts made to weaken its Authority, it is with no better Success than that of *Celsus* or *Hierocles*, who endeavoured to set up an *Aristeas*, or an *Apollonius*, in Competition with our Blessed Saviour; and opposed their pitiful Shifts and Impostures, to his approved and incontestable Miracles. But

But there is somewhat farther to be respected. Hitherto we have consider'd the Scripture as able and sufficient to support it self without any supernatural Aid; and by the sole Evidence of Human Testimony, and such Characters as belong to other Writings in common with that: But there is a further Point in Reserve, and which I had chiefly in my Eye, and that is an Authority superior to all others, and peculiar to Scripture, That I mean of Divine Revelation; and what for the Matter of it was inspired from above. And this, the due Consideration of it as an excellent History will open a Way to; when we find not only all the Principles, Precepts, and Means, that are necessary to a Virtuous Life therein taught and preserib'd; but also admirable Examples of it in Fact, that nothing might be wanting to animate and incourage us to the like Practice. See it in the *Noahs*, the *Abrahams*, the *Josephs*, the *Job's*, the *Moses's*, the *Davids*, and all the Patriarchs of old. See it in the Holy Apostles, the Martyrs and Confessors; but above all in the Example of Examples, our Blessed Saviour. Sermon IV.

Here is a History, that fills the Mind with the best Ideas and Images of Things; that represents the Instances of our Duty with all the Advantage to our Thoughts, that recommends it self to our Attention by the Importance and Profitableness of the Argument, as well as the Force of its Authority.

Sermon IV.

thority. Upon this therefore let us dwell, and make it the delightful Subject of our moſt ſerious Hours, which will abundantly reward all our Pains, and is ſufficient to *furniſh us throughly unto all good works.*

SER-

SERMON V.

HEB. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN theſe Words, there is contain'd, (as I have before ſhewed)

I. A Deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking.*

II. The *Certainty* of it; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at ſundry times,* &c. 'Tis taken for granted.

III. The Order obſerv'd in delivering this Revelation; it was *at ſundry times, and in divers manners,* &c.

IV. The Perfection and Concluſion of all, 'tis in *theſe laſt days by his Son.*

Under

Sermon V.

Under the Second I have shewed,

1. That God has actually revealed his Will *at sundry times, and in divers manners.*

2. What are the Characters of true Revelation.

3. I am now in order to prove, that the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testament* do contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

In which there are Two Things to be considered:

1. The Matter contained in Scripture.

2. The Books containing that Matter.

Which Two will admit of a distinct Consideration. For,

(1.) These Two, the Matter and the Books, were originally distinct; for the Matter was revealed before it was written, and would have been of the same Authority if unwritten, as written. The Writing not being essential to the Authority, but only made use of as a fit Means for the Conveyance and Preservation of the Matter.

(2.) These Two are capable of a different Proof: For the Matter of Scripture was confirmed by Miracles, and had a Divine Attestation given to it: But we don't find the like Testimony given to the Books. There were Miracles upon Miracles to confirm the Truth, suppo-

ſuppoſe, contained in the Four Evangeliſts; but none to prove thoſe Four Goſpels to be wrote by Perſons inſpired, or that theſe were the Books wrote by them. For that has another Sort of Evidence, to be hereafter inquired into. Sermon V.

'Tis fit theſe Two ſhould be conſidered apart. For,

(1.) If we were to diſcourſe with a profeſſed Infidel, we muſt begin with the Truth of the Matter, and then proceed to the Authority of the Books: And we may make Converts (as the Apoſtles and others in thoſe Primitive Times did) from the Proof we are able to make of the Truth and Authority of our Religion, though at the preſent we have not the Books.

(2.) It's of no little Advantage. For by handling the Matter apart from the Books, we need not for the preſent concern our ſelves in the Doubts and Objections about the Books; ſuch as the ſuppoſed Inconſiſtences in Scripture; the various Readings; the uncertainty of the Authors; the Subject of Inſpiration, whether Words as well as Matter, *&c.*

Theſe being laid aſide for the preſent, by this diſtinct Conſideration of the Matter and the Books, will ſhorten our Work; and if we prove the Matter to be of Divine Original, we alſo gain a great Point toward the Proof of the Books themſelves.

I am

Sermon V.

I am to begin with the Matter contained in Scripture.

Now that is of a diverſe Nature, and therefore according to the Nature of it, ſo is its Authority. For there is Matter of Fact and Hiſtorical Relations of Things; and when we ſay theſe are of Divine Authority, we thereby mean they were recorded and committed to Writing by the Appointment, Direction or Command of God. Again, there are Matters of a Moral Nature, which might be found out by, and are the Dictates of pure Reaſon; and when we ſay theſe are of Divine Authority, we thereby underſtand that they are authoriſed by the Divine Command, as well as in their own Nature Obligatory. In which Caſes *holy men of God ſpake*, and wrote, *as they were moved*, incited, *by the Holy Ghoſt*, 2 Pet. 1. 21.

But the more eſpecial Way was, when the Matter was purely of Divine Revelation, and wholly proceeding from it; and though this were not to be learned, and found out by Reaſon, (as has been before ſhewed) yet 'tis agreeable to it; as I ſhall now proceed to prove; and that I ſhall do in this Order.

1. I ſhall conſider, The Claim which the Matter of Scripture hath to Revelation and Inſpiration.

2. The Characters upon which that Claim is grounded.

3. The Proof by which that Claim to Revelation is made good.

I. I ſhall

I. I ſhall conſider the Claim, *&c.* And that is, If the Matter contained in the Scripture be not a Revelation from God, and the True Revelation, then there neither is, nor ever was, nor can be ſuch a Revelation. Sermon V.

1. If That be not a Divine Revelation, there is no Revelation; for as That denies and rejects all Revelation beſides it ſelf, ſo there is none other that can produce ſuch Evidence for it: And conſequently, if notwithſtanding the Evidence producible for Scripture, That is not to be admitted for Divine, then there is no Revelation exiſtent in the World, ſince no other has the Evidence which That appears to have. This we may leave to any indifferent Perſon to judge of, by comparing the *Alcoran* with the *Bible*; and the *Chineſe* Divinity of a *Confutius*, with that of Chriſtianity.

2. If this be not a Revelation from God, then there never has been ſuch a Revelation; and that for the Reaſon before given, *viz.* That there is no other Revelation extant ſave this. But if there ever had been a Revelation, and a Revelation deſigned for all Mankind, (as that of the Goſpel apparently is) what was once, would always, and for ever afterwards, have been exiſtent; ſince the ſame Reaſon there was once for a Revelation to Mankind, the ſame would have been for the Continuance of it; and the ſame Divine Goodneſs that took care there ſhould be a Revelation, would certain-

Sermon V.

ly have taken the like Care for the preferving of it. But if there be no Revelation, (as there is not, if the Scripture be not that Revelation) then there never was a Revelation; and ſo all that has been before ſaid upon this Argument, about the Exiſtence, Uſefulneſs, and Neceſſity of a Revelation, muſt go for nothing.

3. If the Scripture be not of Divine Revelation, then there never can be a Revelation, or at leaſt ſuch a Revelation as ſhall oblige us to receive and believe it; ſince there can be no ſtronger Evidence produced for the Proof of it, than there is for that of Scripture. And therefore he that will pretend not to believe the Scripture-Revelation for want of ſufficient Evidence, can never be convinced of the Truth of any Revelation. For what better Evidence can be given, as to the Matter, the Perſons Inſpired, the Supernatural Proofs of Miracles and Prophecy, *&c.* than what we have for the Scripture?

Admit then that there is, or ever was, or may be a Divine Revelation, we may be certain that the Matter contain'd in Scripture is of that Nature.

But though this muſt be allowed to be a good Step towards the Proof of the Divine Authority; yet it remains to conſider what that Evidence is which is thus peculiar to Scripture-Revelation, and that none beſides

ſides ever have or can have: And this is the Subject of the Second General: Sermon V.

Which is to conſider,

II. The Characters belonging to Revelation, upon which that Claim is grounded.

That Revelation may be diſtinguiſh'd from Impoſture and mere Pretence, there muſt be proper Characters that are eſſential to Revelation; without which Marks of Diſtinction, we muſt do by it as few have done, and totally reject it; or elſe as the *Romans* did by the Deities of other Countries, that admitted all into their *Calendar*, we muſt refuſe none. But ſince there has been a Revelation (as all Mankind have been inclined to believe), and ſeveral Pretences to it (as the Experience of all Ages has ſhewed), we muſt follow the Direction of Scripture, which not only warns us of *falſe Prophets*, and exhorts us to *try the Spirits*, but does alſo furniſh us with ſuch Characters, as will enable us to diſtinguiſh the True from the Falſe. 2 *Pet.* 2. 21. 1 *Joh.* 4. 1, &c.

And this Direction, methinks, may paſs for one Character, according to that of our Saviour, Joh. 3. 20, 21. *Every one that doth evil*, or ſpeaketh falſly, *hateth the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved*, and his Pretences diſcover'd. *But he that doeth* and ſpeaketh *truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought in God*;

or that what he saith, may appear to be a Revelation from him.

Sermon V.

Now when the Revelation so called doth thus offer it self to an impartial Tryal, and exhorts and requires all Persons to examine and make enquiry, and lays down such Rules, Principles, and Characters, as in the Opinion of all Men are sufficient to distinguish the True from the False; 'tis an undoubted Sign that it is able to justify it self, and to make out its Claim to a Divine Authority, by a Correspondence to those Characters.

By this the Scripture is distinguish'd from all others; for though there were several among the Heathen Law-givers that pretendedt o derive their Laws from the Direction of their Gods, yet it was rather to prevent Enquiry, than encourage it; and to oblige the People to an absolute Submission: For who might dispute that which the Gods commanded? Or who durst so much as enquire, where the *Fear of Religion* restrained them?

Justin. Hist. l. 3.

But to expose it self to a Trial, and to require that Men examine before they receive and believe, and to give them such Signs as shall serve to describe the Truth, and detect Imposture, is peculiar to the Scripture. From thence therefore it is that I shall produce such Characters as will give that a Title to Divine Authority, and oblige us to a Belief of it. And what are such, if these

theſe are not? *viz.* That it could come only from God, is worthy of him, and has a Divine and Supernatural Evidence to atteſt it. Where theſe are, there is a Divine Authority, there is a Revelation. And theſe I ſhall ſhew do belong to what the Scripture propoſes as ſuch. Sermon V.

I. It is a Character belonging to Revelation, and a Sign of the Truth of it, when it apparently has God for the Author, and can proceed from none but him. This is a Character, I preſume, will upon Examination be found to belong to Scripture.

As I ſhall now attempt to prove, by conſidering that which is the chief Subject of it; and that is the Revelation of God's Good Will to Mankind.

Here I ſhall premiſe and take for granted,

1. That God having created Man, created him in a State of Innocency and Purity; for being infinitely Good, it is not to be conceived that he made any thing Evil in it ſelf.

2. That Man fell from this happy State; of Innocent, he became Guilty; of a Pure, he became a Depraved Creature, as the Experience of all Ages ſhews him now to be.

3. That Almighty God was diſpoſed to pardon and admit him again to favour.

Upon this State of Things the Scripture proceeds: And becauſe it was impoſſible for Man to find out of himſelf the Way and

Sermon V.

Means by which he might be reſtored, there needed a Revelation to inform him in it.

I Grant there is a Natural Means, and what the Reaſon of the Thing ſuppoſes to be neceſſary to our Reconciliation, and that is Repentance.

But that this is of it ſelf a Means ſufficient, and upon which alone God will be reconciled to the Offenders, has been always doubted of; as is evident from the ſeveral ways of Atonement, and eſpecially of Sacrifices, practiſed in all Parts of the World. For ſince God is the Governor of the World, it ſeems no more reconcilable with his Juſtice, and conſiſtent with that Authority he is to maintain, to pardon all Offenders upon Repentance, than it is conſiſtent with the Ends of Government among Men, to accept of the Offenders Penitence as a full Satisfaction to the Law, and to remit the Penalty threatned.

We have an Inſtance to the contrary, in this very Caſe; when, notwithſtanding a ſuppoſed Repentance in Mankind, God inflicted the Penalty threatned, *In the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt dye.* Now therefore, ſince the Natural Means of propitiating Almighty God was not ſufficient, there is ſomewhat further in reſerve; and what that is, none could tell, but he who had it in his own Power what to accept, and what to refuſe; it was for him to reveal, that was to inſtitute.

And

Sermon V.

And if we take a view of the Scheme of what the Scripture ſets before us as to this Matter, it will abundantly confirm what I have propoſed as a Character of Revelation, and that is, That it is from God, and only from him.

The Sum of which is, That ſince Mankind had thus lapſed into a Preternatural State, in which, through the Infirmity and Corruption of their Nature, they themſelves neither were, nor could do what was acceptable to God; in order to a Reſtitution and Reconciliation, it was deſigned that the Son of God himſelf ſhould become a Mediator by a preſent Stipulation, and in a prefixed Time, by an actual Undertaking to dye for us. That accordingly, in Teſtimony of God's Acceptance of the Atonement, and of his Reconciliation, the Son roſe from the dead, and aſcended into Heaven, is there our Interceſſor, and the Diſpenſer of all thoſe Gifts, and that Supervenient Grace which is neceſſary to the reforming Mankind, and the fitting them for that State he is now inveſted in, and has promiſed to beſtow upon ſuch as are qualified for it.

Now who is there, that upon a Review of theſe ſeveral Particulars that do conſtitute the Chriſtian Religion, and make up the chief Subject of Scriptural Revelation, can pretend that this was to be found out by Human Conſideration and Enquiry; or rather, that muſt not grant it proceeded

Sermon V.

from God? Especially if it be observed what a wonderful Intermixture there is in this Scheme, of the Divine Mercy and Justice; of his Mercy in pardoning the Sinner, and of his Justice in requiring an Atonement. What a Representation of his Hatred to Sin on one hand, when God established so valuable an Atonement as the Blood of his own Son; and of his Favour and Love to Mankind, when *he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all?* What a Foundation for our Hope on one hand, when he accepted of the Propitiation; and what a Dread of Offending is there on the other, when *he that knew no sin, was made a sin-offering for us?*

All which laid together, do confirm the Truth of this Character, and the Title that the Scripture-Revelation hath to it.

But there is somewhat further to be added in Proof of this Point, That it was a Revelation from God; and that is, The many Prophecies that are interwoven with it in Scripture; which could proceed from none but Him who alone has all Causes and Events in his Power, and so alone could foretell how those Causes would operate, and what should be the Events of such Operation. These being the chief part of the Revelation concerning the whole Scheme of Man's Salvation, confirm what I have before said, That it was from God, and from Him alone. But this must be reserved to its proper Place, under the Third General Head.

To

Sermon V.

To go on:

II. A Character neceſſarily belonging to Divine Revelation, is, That it be worthy of God, and what becomes the Majeſty of Heaven to make known to Mankind.

When we ſay it is to be worthy of Him, thereby is meant, that it is ſuitable to the Perfections of his Nature, to his Holineſs and Juſtice, his Goodneſs and Mercy, his Wiſdom and Power, *&c.* To which, and all of which, a Revelation truly ſo can no more be repugnant, than God himſelf can be other than he is, and deſtitute of thoſe Perfections which are eſſential to him.

In diſcourſing upon which we may obſerve,

1. That it cannot be denied but the Revelation of himſelf to Mankind is worthy of God, though it be an infinite Condeſcention.

It was an Infinite Condeſcention in the Deity, that had all in himſelf, to make ſuch a Creature as Man; and it is no more unworthy of God to reveal himſelf to him, than it was to make him. For what other Reaſon was there for the making ſuch a Creature, and the enduing him with the Light of Reaſon, but that he might own, honour, and ſerve the Author of his Being? And ſince to know and acknowledge God is the chief End for which Man was made, it is as much becoming Almighty God

Sermon V.

God to reveal himself to him, as it was to make him for the Knowledge of himself.

2. That is a Thing worthy of God to reveal, which is a Thing worthy of God to do: And such is the Recovery and Restoration of Man to the like Condition he was created in, and unhappily fell from; for that is a Kind of Re-making him, and giving him a New Being: And since a New Being to a Depraved Being, what Being was to No Being, it is as much becoming Almighty God from a Depraved State to raise him to a State of Purity and Holiness, as it was at the first to give him a Being that before had none.

And this is the great Subject of what we call Divine Revelation; which as it respects Man, may come under a Twofold Consideration; and that is the Perfection of Human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind.

It will be a needless Undertaking, to prove that these Ends are worthy of God; but that which rather becomes us is to shew, That as it is the great Design of the Scriptural Revelation to represent this, and to acquaint us with the Method that the Almighty Wisdom and Goodness thought fit to observe; so the Method, as there laid down, is worthy of such Wisdom and Goodness, as I shall now proceed to shew in the Two Instances given.

First, The Method Almighty God is in Scripture said to take for the purifying and

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the perfecting Human Nature, is highly worthy of so Glorious a Being; and that is Threefold, Cautionary, Moral, and Supernatural. Sermon V.

(1.) That which I call Cautionary, is the Way Almighty God was pleased to take for the representing his Displeasure against Sin, and to make Mankind cautious of offending. The Means made use of before the Fall was a Penalty threatned, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt dye.* But because that had proved of so little Force to restrain Mankind, and for fear lest when God had received them into Favour after such a Threatning, his Mercy and Indulgence might be abused, and become an Encouragement to Sin, God added thereunto an Expiation (as has been before said), and that to be made by his own Son; who from the Dignity of his Person, and the voluntary Oblation of himself, should be reputed as a Representative of the Whole, and the Whole be esteemed to suffer with him. By which Means, as God's Mercy would be abundantly testified in a Design for redeeming them; so his Justice would be exemplified, when he that had no Sin of his own, should yet be made a Sin-Offering, and suffer for them. For how could they presume after this to offend the Almighty Father, when rather than suffer his Laws to be violated, his Authority slighted, his Holiness and Justice disparaged, or leave Mankind under a Temptation

Sermon V.

tation so to do, he would express his Hatred against Sin, and his Resolution to punish it, by requiring and substituting such a Sacrifice as that of his Son in their Stead? This is the apparent Reason of such an Institution; and both the Institution and Reason of it are worthy of the Divine Counsel; since there is no Way in which these Things can be represented to greater Advantage, than by the Scripture-Scheme of Man's Redemption.

(2.) There is the Moral Means, that serves the same End, *viz.* the purifying and perfecting Human Nature, to which, Revelation gave the last and finishing Hand. It is true, these Moral Principles are no other than Natural Maxims, and which were Nature, unassisted, sufficient for, might have been extracted out of it. But Mankind were no more able to attain to that Skill of themselves, than an unexperienced Person, and unacquainted with the Art of Chymistry, can extract such Exalted and Generous Spirits out of the Bodies of Plants and Animals, as upon Trial we find they are endued with. It is another Light we view Nature by, since the communicating of the Evangelical Revelation to the World. Nature and Reason now, are not the Nature and the Reason they were before, or are still where that Revelation has not been known: And therefore if we would know what the Force of those Principles are, and how far they operated by

their

their own Power, and of themſelves, the Way is not to judge of it as it appears to us, where the Goſpel Revelation is, but as it was in the State of pure *Heatheniſm*, not excepting the finer Part of it (as it flouriſhed in *Greece* it ſelf) and as it is now in ſome of the remote Parts of the World, as in the *Weſt-Indies*, &c. For *Gentiliſm* it ſelf apparently mended upon the Publication of the Goſpel; and then their *Moraliſts* wrote with another Strain, than thoſe of their own Sect did before that Time. Sermon V.

For in the Scripture, there is ſuch an entire and compleat Syſtem of all Things requiſite to the Perfection of Human Nature (as far as in this State it is capable of it) that Nothing is wanting for Direction and Obligation.

There we find the moſt Natural Characters of Good and Evil traced along from the firſt Riſe in all their Tendencies, and the juſt Bounds of both deſcribed. There we have on one Hand the moſt enforcing Encouragements to Virtue and Goodneſs, and on the other the moſt neceſſary Cautions and Admonitions againſt Sin; and both fortified with proper Inſtances and Examples.

There we find the Nobleſt Principles, and exacteſt Rules; and the great Lines of our Duty plainly ſet forth in their utmoſt Extent; and that as well for the Regulation of the Thoughts and Deſires, as the Government of our Actions. There

Sermon V.

There we find that Duty enforced by the higheſt Obligation, by no leſs Authority than that of God himſelf, whoſe Precepts and Injunctions they are declared to be, and not the mere Reſults of our own Nature and Reaſon.

And whereas Nature falls as ſhort in its Sanctions (having only Conſcience to enforce them) as its Authority; when theſe Moral Principles become God's Laws, they have Rewards and Puniſhments of another Kind annexed to them, and as everlaſting as our Souls to bind them upon us.

So that as far as Nature thus directed and excited can go, we have the moſt effectual Means in our Power for the Amendment and Purification of it.

But becauſe it is only ſo far in our Power, and that in the Iſſue we prove too remiſs in the exerting of it; and that after all, Nature flags and recoils, and is too much Nature ſtill. Therefore,

(3.) There is a Supernatural Means to render the other effectual, and to give Encouragement and Succeſs to our Endeavours; and that is a Power as Divine as the Authority, which is the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit of God. Look we upon the Morality of the greateſt Philoſophers, how poor is that to the Doctrine of our Saviour and the Apoſtles? Look we upon the Fruits of it, and there we ſhall find them ſhort of their Principles; and that the Caſe was much with them as with the Stoical *Poſidonius*, that would

would not allow Paſſions in Human Nature; that when invaded by the Gout, might chide both that and himſelf for his Senſation of it; but the Diſeaſe and Nature kept on their Courſe, and would own no ſuch Authority. So it was with them that had only Nature to correct Nature; that while they pretended to be the Phyſicians of it, could not cure themſelves, nor alter ſo much as Cuſtom which had altered that. Sermon V.

The Inſtances they give of a Philoſophical Cure, are as rare as the Miracles they pretend to have been wrought in the Temple of *Æſculapius*, or by a *Veſpaſian*, few and queſtionable; a *Phædon*, or a *Polemon*, to credit the Schools of a *Socrates* or a *Xenocrates*. But the Inſtances of ſuch as were converted by our Saviour and Apoſtolical Perſons, were like his Miracles, numberleſs and not to be diſputed. When the Goſpel flew like Lightning through the Earth, and became as ſucceſsful in reforming, as teaching the World; Nature by it was changed, and the Temper became ſubject to the Divine Power. So that the Doctrine of Chriſt *did turn thoſe that were immerſed in wickedneſs, to a life agreeable to Reaſon, and the Practice of all Virtue*; as *Origen* ſhews, and appeals to his Adverſary in. Contr. Celſ. l. 1. & 2.

And what was then done, would always be done, if there were not ſome Obſtruction on our Part, either as to asking Aſſiſtance, or in the not improving it; according to that of our Saviour, *Matthew* 13. 12. *Whoſoever*

Sermon V.

ſoever hath, and uſeth it, *to him ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundance.*

2*dly*. It is worthy of God, and becoming the moſt Benevolent as well as the moſt Powerful of Beings, to conſult what may be for the Happineſs of the Reaſonable Nature, and to propound this as an Encouragement to them in the Performance of that Service he expects and requires of them.

And what can make them Happy, if the Order and Method of Salvation revealed in Scripture be not ſufficient for it? Whereby they are not only aſſured of the Protection and Bleſſing of Divine Providence in this Life, but alſo of a State of Immortality in the Life to come: Where they ſhall be taken into the Enjoyment of their Ever-bleſſed Creator; and be fitted both in Body and Soul, by the Divine Power, for ſuch a Participation.

To which I may add, That it is as worthy of God to reveal the Way by which that Happineſs is to be attained. I grant, that by the Uſe and Power of Reaſon, and the Senſe we have of the Difference between Good and Evil, we may learn, though obſcurely, and very imperfectly, what is acceptable to God: But yet without Revelation we are much in the Dark, and can as little know what is on our Part neceſſary toward the Attaining of that Happineſs, as we do what the Condition of the Future State is, and wherein the Happineſs of it conſiſts.

There

Sermon V.

There is as much difference between what is only suppoſed, and what is neceſſary, as there is between what we hope for, and what is certain. And therefore, as there needs a Revelation to aſſure us of that which without Revelation we only hoped for; ſo there is as much need of Revelation to inform us of what is neceſſary to our Acceptance with God, and to our Happineſs in another World; and without which we are left to Conjecture only. So that as far as Certainty is to be preferr'd beyond Hope and Imagination, and the Knowledge of what is neceſſary is beyond Conjecture; ſo much is the Comfort of Revelation beyond that of Nature; and ſo much it is becoming Almighty God, who gave us our Nature and Being, to acquaint us with what may both make us Happy, and lead us to it. Eſpecially was this neceſſary, conſidering how far the World had wandered out of the Right Way; and what Superſtitious and Infamous Rites had been taken up; and what Practices, diſhonourable to the Deity and Human Nature, had been uſed. And this Way to Happineſs the Scripture has plainly reveal'd.

3*dly*. It is a Deſign worthy of God, to reveal Himſelf to the World, and to give Mankind a Right Notion and Repreſentation of his Nature. The Being of God, is what the whole Creation proclaims; and there are ſome Attributes of his lye open to all,

Sermon V.

and are conſpicuous in their Effects; ſuch are his Wiſdom and Power. But there are others that we rather know by Inference, and need a farther and brighter Light to inform us in; and ſuch are his Goodneſs and his Mercy. And ſince theſe are as eſſential Perfections of the Deity as the other, and exceed them in the Influence they have upon Mankind, as to our Love and Adoration of him; and yet are not ſo legible in the Frame of Nature, nor ſo obſervable in the Courſe of his Providence as the other; we cannot conceive but that it is as becoming our Creator to repreſent himſelf to be a God Gracious and Merciful in a Revelation to Mankind, as to be a God Great, Powerful, and Wiſe in the Creation. We ſee how confuſed the *Gentile* World was in their Notion of the Supreme Power; how inconſiſtently they thought, and how low their Repreſentations were of the Deity: And at beſt they had a very imperfect Notion of thoſe Divine Attributes of Love and Goodneſs, of Pity and Compaſſion, of Indulgence and Condeſcention, of Patience and Forbearance, of Mercy and Forgiveneſs, which the Scripture repreſents with Life and Perſpicuity.

There it is that we find the Almighty Creator ſtooping to the Creature, condeſcending to their Condition, bearing with their Infirmities, pitying their Miſeries, forgiving their Sins. There we find him reproving

proving, arguing, following Sinners with Importunity, and leaving nothing undone, that was consistent with his Nature and Honour to do, toward the Salvation of Mankind. And above all, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him,* 1 Joh. 4. 9. Sermon V.

So that if to reveal what was not otherwise to be known, concerning God's Reconciliation to Mankind, and the Terms upon which he is reconciled; if to restore Man to the State he is fallen from, and to promote him to a State of Purity, Perfection, and Happiness; if for God to reveal and to render himself acceptable to Mankind by the most obliging Characters of Love and Favour, be worthy of him; lastly, if to reveal what is most worthy of God, be a Character of Revelation, Then the Scripture is such, and what is therein contained must be from God.

III. A Character necessarily belonging to Revelation, and by which the True is to be distinguished from the False and Pretended, is a Divine and Supernatural Evidence; which is the same with the Third General Head, *viz.* The Proof by which the Scripture's Claim to Divine Revelation is to be made good; and that is next to be considered.

Sermon V.

Now there are Three Instances of this kind, *viz.* Prophecy, Miracles, and the wonderful Success of the Christian Religion, and the Preservation of it under the most potent Opposition, and greatest Discouragements.

Cic. de Divin. l. 1.

(1.) Prophecy. That is of it self a Revelation; and as it is what all Nations, as well Learned as Barbarous, have acknowledged; so being an Instance of Revelation, it is a good Proof of that Revelation which it doth accompany, and is interwoven with. And this is the Case before us; for the Scripture being composed of Matters of a different kind, cannot have the same Sort of Evidence: But Prophecy being Self-evident, (when the Event has apparently answer'd the Prediction) and a Supernatural Evidence, is a good Proof to what has no such Evidence; and which for the Sake of this Proof is as much a Matter of Faith, and as credible, as the Prophecy it self; because such a Testimony being a Testimony from God, cannot be applied to the Support of a Falshood. So that where there is Prophecy truly so, we may conclude that to be True, and to come from God, to which that Testimony is given; for if the Testimony be Divine, the Doctrine confirmed by it must be Divine also.

In discoursing upon which, I premise,

1. That there is such a Thing as Prophecy; that Things future have been predicted:

Tully

Tully saith, *This all Nations have agreed in*; as has been afore said. Sermon V.

2. That Prophecy is a good Testimony to what it is given (as I have proved already).

So that there is nothing remains, but to shew that the Revelation in Scripture hath had this Testimony.

And of this there are two Sorts, Near, or Remote. Of both which, we have an Instance in the Prophet sent to *Jeroboam*, 1 Kings 13. 2.

The Remote was, That a Child should be born, *Josiah* by Name, about 330 Years after, who should burn Mens Bones upon that Altar. The Proximate (which we may otherwise call a Sign) was, That at that Time *the Altar should be rent, and the ashes poured out.* If the Remote had been alone, it would have had little Influence upon them who were most nearly concerned; and therefore there needed some present Sign to verify it. But otherwise, the Remote is the stronger, especially when at such a vast Distance of Time, as shall render it impossible for Men or Angels to foresee, or by any Practices of theirs to accomplish; when it depends upon Voluntary as Natural Agents, and is in the Conclusion answered by a Parallel Event, it is to After-Ages a certain and indisputable Evidence.

To which, if we add the Concurrence of both, when there is a Chain and Series of Prophecies near or remote, in a certain and

Sermon V.

continued Order following each other, the first looking forward to others that are to succeed, and the latter having Retrospect to the former; there is no reasonable or possible Exception to be made against the Matter thus testified, without excepting against the Testimony of Prophecy, contrary to the Sense of all Mankind.

As for Instance; If there be a Prophecy or Prophecies in several Ages, from which it plainly appears, that at such a precise Time, in such an Age of the World, some Hundreds or Thousands of Years after, there should arise a certain Person, born at such a Place, and in an extraordinary Way, and descended from such and such Progenitors, who should come to reform Mankind; and, in Confirmation of his Doctrine, should perform many astonishing Acts, and do many Supernatural Works; that at a certain Time, and in a certain determined Year, he should be put to Death by his own Nation, and upon it that Nation should be captivated and destroyed, and the Country desolate; it is a Testimony not to be disproved.

And yet setting aside the many Prophecies in Scripture relating to particular Persons and Families, to the *Jews* and other Nations, I shall only instance in some, of those concerning our Saviour; and others, of our Saviour's himself: The former of which will appear to be exactly parallel to the Case proposed.

The

Sermon V.

The first of these is the Prediction immediately after the Fall of *Adam*, and 4000 Years before the actual Completion of it; That there should be one born *of the seed of the woman*, and supernaturally *made* of her alone (as *Adam* was out of the Earth without a Woman) that should *bruise the serpent's head*, who had *beguiled Eve through his subtilty*. Gen. 2. 14. Gal. 4. 4.

About 2000 Years after which Prophecy, and so 2000 Years before our Saviour, it was revealed to *Abraham*, That in his *Seed*, and by one who should descend from him, *all the families of the earth should be blessed*; and which was afterward renewed to *Isaac* and *Jacob*. Gal. 3. 16. Gen. 12. 3, &c.

Again; about 1700 Years before Christ, it was propheſied by *Jacob*, That *Shiloh*, or the *Messiah*, should descend from his Son *Judah*. Gen. 49. 8.

About 1000 Years before our Saviour's Birth, *David* was exalted to the Throne, of whose Family the *Messiah* was to be a *Branch*; whence it was that he was commonly known among the *Jews*, by the Character of *David's Son*. Matth. 22. 42.

In the same Royal Prophet have we the Prediction of our Saviour's Death, Resurrection, and Glorification; and in very minute Circumstances, as to the first of these, *Vid.* Psal. 16. 10. 22. 1, 7, 8, 14, 16, 18. 110, *&c.*

This is also the great Theme of *Isaiah's* Prophecy, 700 Years before the Accomplish-

Sermon V.

ment, That there ſhould be *a root out of Jeſſe*, the *Meſſiah*, who ſhould die for the Sins of the People, be rejected by his own Nation, but be believed by the *Gentiles*. Iſa. 11. 10. 42. 10, &c. 53.

In the ſame Age lived *Micah*, who fore-
Mic. 5. 2. tells the very Place he ſhould be born in, *viz. Bethlehem-Ephrata.*

Laſtly; About 500 Years before our Lord's Incarnation, *Daniel* directly points to the Time and the Year the *Meſſiah* ſhould ſuffer
Dan. 9. 24, &c. in, which was to be in the Midſt of the Seventieth Prophetical Week, (each of which
Lev. 25. 8. conſiſts of Seven Years) that is, the 490th Year, from the Decree of *Artaxerxes* for the rebuilding of *Jeruſalem*. As may eaſily be computed by *Ptolemy*'s Canon, and reckoning the Years backward from the Death of our Saviour, (which was in the Reign of *Tiberius*) to ſome fixed Year of *Artaxerxes*.

In Conſequence of which, the City and Sanctuary were to be deſtroyed, and the whole Country laid deſolate, as with a *Flood*.

This Concluſion leads us on to the Second Branch of Prophetical Obſervations, *viz.* our Saviour's own Predictions, which are very many; but a moſt remarkable one is his Prophecy of the Deſtruction of that People, City, and Country, foretold by *Daniel* as to the very Time; and which our Saviour deſcribes ſo particularly, as if he had it at that Inſtant before his Eyes, when he diſcourſed of it to his Diſciples.

There

There he foretells, * The preceding Signs, as Famines, and fearful Sights, *&c.* * That many False Prophets should arise. * That there should be barbarous Slaughters one of another. * That *Jerusalem* should be closely besieged; but withal, that at that Time there should be an Opportunity for escaping; which he advises them to take, and to fly to the Mountains for present Security. * That the Enemy should at last cast a Trench about it, and keep them that remained in on every Side. * That he should finally take the City, and lay it even with the Ground; and that not one Stone of the stately Structure, the Temple, (which they then were admiring) should be left upon another. * That the Surviving *Jews* should be led Captive into all Nations, and never return again to that Land as Proprietors. * That all this was because they knew not the Time of their Visitation. * And that this should happen in that very Age. Sermon V.

Never was any Prophecy more express, never any Sentence more terrible, nor more punctually fulfilled, as to all the Particulars before-recited; and for which we may appeal to *Josephus* the *Jew*, who was an Eye-Witness of all, and as exactly describes it as to those Instances, as if he was writing a Comment upon our Saviour's Prophecy. *Joseph. de Bell.* l. 4, 5, 6, 7.

And accordingly, as the Temple, though attempted by *Julian* the Apostate's Order, never

Sermon V.

never could be built; (as the Heathen Hiſtorian *Ammianus Marcellinus* relates, *Hiſt.* l. 23.) ſo that People to this Day remain Vagabonds, without any certain Place, diſperſed over the World.

Having traced this Subject thus far, we may proceed.

2. Another Way by which we prove the Claim that the Matter of Scripture hath to a Divine Authority, is Miracles; of which Kind there is nothing wanting that can reaſonably be deſired; and that either as to the *Judaical*, or *Chriſtian* Diſpenſation.

As for Inſtance: If a Perſon ſhould pretend that he comes from God with a Revelation, and which he requires us to hearken to, on Peril of Damnation: What Satisfaction ſhould we deſire?

Surely if the Doctrine he teaches be in it ſelf credible, and worthy of God, and what in the Nature and Tendency of it proves to be uſeful and beneficial to Mankind, we have as much Evidence as the Nature of the Thing will bear. And farther, if the Perſon, upon whom we are to rely, doth openly, and in the Sight of all, even of Enemies that watch him, as well as Friends, and in the moſt Publick Aſſemblies, cure all Manner of Diſeaſes, though naturally incurable, by a Word, or a Touch, and even at a Diſtance. If he commands the Winds and the Seas, the Good and the Evil Angels, feeds Thouſands in a Deſart with no more than what would

ſatis-

satisfy a few, and raises the Dead. If he tells the most secret Thoughts, Inclinations, and Practices of his Enemies as well as Followers. Lastly, If when himself is put to a violent Death, he in a few Days, according to his own Prediction, rises again, appears to, and converses with those that knew him when alive, and saw him dead: And afterwards, in the View of many, ascends bodily into Heaven; and within a few Days, as a farther Testimony of his former Mission and present Glorification, confers the same or like Power upon his Disciples: Who can reasonably doubt of the Truth of what he has taught? Sermon V.

I need not here draw the Parallel.

And if the Question should be put, as it was by those whom *John* the *Baptist* sent, *Art thou he who should come?* Our Saviour's Answer will serve for one here, *Tell John what Things ye have heard and seen, how that the blind see*, &c. *Luke* 7. 19.

There needs no greater Evidence to convince Mankind.

3. Another Proof of the Divine Authority of the Matter of Scripture, is the Event and Success, correspondent to former Predictions. Such was that of the *Israelites* in *Canaan:* And much more, the wonderful and astonishing Progress of the Gospel, without any of that Assistance and Force which that People had, and when it had the Force of Emperors and Kings to oppose it.

Could

Sermon V.

Could it be thought poſſible, that a few ſimple and timorous Perſons, who had been bred up to a mean Employment, and had never been out of their own Country, ſhould each by himſelf undertake perilous and remote Journeys, among People they had no Knowledge of, and to whoſe Tempers, Cuſtoms, and Language, they were altogether Strangers; and ſhould prevail with them to change their Gods and their Religion, their Cuſtoms and their Lives?

Could it be thought, that Men of no Authority nor Intereſt, of no Learning, Depth of Judgement, nor Subtilty in arguing, ſhould be able to maintain and propagate a Doctrine that ſeemed to be fooliſh and abſurd, a Doctrine of a Crucified Saviour, a Doctrine oppoſite to the ſenſual Inclinations and Intereſts of Mankind, (as the State of the World then was) a Doctrine that obliged them that believed in it, to profeſs it with the Hazard of all that was dear to them in this World, and upon no other Encouragement than a Reward in another?

And yet even this Doctrine, ſo meanly attended, became ſo ſucceſsful, that according to our Saviour's Prediction, *Matth.* 24. 14. before the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and within Forty Years after his Death, *the ſound of it went out into all the earth*, Rom. 10. 18. Not to proceed further in this Argument than Scripture; in thoſe early Times we find Converts, if not Churches, in the moſt frequented

quented Cities for Trade, Learning, and Dominion; in *Corinth* and *Ephesus*, *Athens* and *Rome*; in the Courts of Princes, even of a *Herod* and a *Nero*: *Acts* 13. 3. *Phil.* 4. 22. And where not? Sermon V.

Now if there had not been Truth in the Doctrine; If it had not been a Doctrine worthy of God, suitable to the Desires and Expectations of Mankind; If it had not had a Supernatural Evidence and Testimony, and an Assistance as great as its Evidence, it could not in those Circumstances have made its own Way, nor have proved in the Event so powerful and successful. No, it was *God that chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which were mighty:* And it must be a Revelation from him alone, that had all these Testimonies on its Side to confirm it. So that we may conclude as we began, That if ever there was a Revelation, the Revelation contained in Scripture is a Revelation, and the only True Revelation now in the World.

And if so it be, then what an Obligation is there upon us to observe it? When 'tis *God speaking* to us, *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard* from him, *lest at any time we should let them slip*, Heb. 2. 1.

SER-

SERMON VI.

Heb. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN theſe Words, we have (as has been obſerved)

I. A Deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

II. The *Certainty* of that Revelation; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake*, &c.

III. The Order obſerv'd in delivering that Revelation, as to Time, Manner, and Perſons; *In time paſt by the Prophets*, and *in the laſt days by his Son.*

IV. The Concluſion and Perfection of that Revelation, 'tis in *the laſt days by his Son.*

Under

Sermon VI.

Under the Second I have ſhewed,

1. That there has been ſuch a Revelation.
2. That the Scripture is of Divine Revelation, and has upon it the Characters belonging to ſuch Revelation.

For the better diſpoſing of what I had to ſay under this Head, I propoſed Four Queſtions to be reſolved, *viz.* *Serm.* IV.

Q. 1. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be true?
Q. 2. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to have been of Divine Revelation?
Q. 3. How we can prove the Books of Scripture to have been of Divine Inſpiration?
Q. 4. How we prove theſe Books that are now extant, and received by the Chriſtian Church as Canonical, to be thoſe very Books?

I have already Treated of the Two former, and ſhall now take the Two latter into Conſideration.
Where we may obſerve ſomewhat as to the Writers, and then as to Inſpiration.

1. As to the Writers; of whom we may reckon Three Sorts.

(1.) Meerly Human; ſuch as St. *Luke* ſpeaks of, that out of a good and pious Intent,

Sermon VI. *Luk.* 1. 1.

tent, *took in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed.* And this may be done without any material Error by Persons duly qualified for it.

(2.) Those that had what they wrote immediately dictated, or at least approved by such Persons as were inspired. So *Eusebius* saith, that the Gospel of St. *Mark* was approved by St. *Peter*, and St. *Luke*'s by St. *Paul.* *Hist. Eccles. l.* 2. *c.* 15. *l.* 5. *c.* 8.

(3.) Such as were immediately inspired in the Writing, as St. *Peter* and the rest of the Divine Writers are supposed to have been.

Now though the first of these may be sufficient in ordinary Cases, and of good Use in the extraordinary, where there is no better; yet where the Salvation of Mankind is concerned, there is somewhat farther necessary, and that is, that the Persons that write should be assisted and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, or write by the Direction and Approbation of those that are inspired.

2. As to the Inspiration, that is Twofold:

(1.) Either when the Matter, Words, and Order, are immediately dictated by God himself; as the Decalogue was, and all that was revealed by Voice; for then it was as Discourse with us. *Exod.* 20. 1, 22.

(2.) Or,

(2.) Or, When Persons Selected wrote by Direction or Command from God, what was revealed to them, as to the Matter only, whether by Way of Declaration, or Representation. Sermon VI.

In which last Case, the Persons Inspired took their own Way; which is the Reason of the Difference in Style and Phrase between their several Compositions; that, for Example, *Isaiah* writ in a lofty courtly Style; and that *Amos*, a Herdsman, writ after a more Rustical Way. So *Erasmus* saith of St. *Luke*, that he writ in a purer and clearer Style, because of his Skill in the Greek Tongue.

Here the Office of the Divine Spirit was to suggest the Matter, or to represent the Case, to assist and supervise, so that no Error should be in the Original Copy; though he left each to the Liberty of their own Way in expressing it. As if we were to send several Messengers upon the same Errand, we deliver the Message to them, and tell them what they are to say; but leave every one of which to express it as they think fit, and as they are able: Each of them is a faithful and wise Servant, though he keeps not exactly to the very Words of his Master, and all agree in the Drift and Substance, though they differ in the Expression or Circumstance. So it is in the Evangelists, where they all agree in the material Parts of the History,

Sermon VI.

though they differ often in the Words, and sometimes, perhaps, in some minute Passages relating to it.

In one or other of these two Senses, the Scripture may be said to be wrote by Divine Inspiration; that is, either by immediate and verbal Suggestion, or by Direction: And this I shall now endeavour to prove, by answering the Third Question, *viz.*

Q. 3. How we do prove the Books of Scripture, which contain the Matter of Revelation, to have been of Divine Inspiration?

In proceeding upon this, I shall premise:

1. That the proper Course for proving the Divine Authority of the Scripture, is to begin with the Matter, abstracted from the Books, (as I have already done) and then to proceed from thence to the Books.

And therefore they begin at the wrong End, that would disprove the Truth of the Revelation, or Matter contained in Scripture, by such Objections as they make from the Writing, and the Books. For the Matter stands upon a Proof and Evidence of its own (as I have shewed), and will stand, though the written Word, or Scripture, should fail of supporting its own Authority.

Therefore those that will venture upon disproving the Revelation, must in Reason begin with the Matter; let them there try their Skill, and call in Question the Proof

Proof by which that is supported. But this we have already prevented, by having proved the Matter of Scripture to have been of Divine Inspiration. Sermon VI.

2. Though there seems not to be so clear and full a Proof for the Inspiration of the Books, as there is for the Matter, since the Matter has the utmost Attestation it is capable of, *viz.* Miracles; but there were no Miracles wrought to prove these Books to have been of Divine Inspiration (as has been before observed): Yet if we prove that the Books were written by Inspired Persons, and that what they wrote is the same with what they taught, it is equivalent, and much of the same Force and Authority. *Serm.* V. *p.* 151.

For what need was there of Miracles to prove the Books to be written by Inspiration, when the Persons writing them were Inspired, and that what they wrote is the same with what they taught, and when what they taught was confirmed by the Miracles which they wrought?

Therefore while the Authors were in Being, there needed no Miracles to prove these Writings to be theirs, when they themselves asserted them so to be: And after their Decease, we have as much Reason to believe the Scriptures which they wrote, to have been of Divine Inspiration, as what they taught to be a Revelation; both now depending upon the like Evi-

Sermon VI.

dence, that is, Teſtimony, as to which we have no more Proof of the Matter, than we have of the Books.

3. From hence it follows, That not to believe the Scripture to have been of Divine Inſpiration, is in Effect to reject and deny the Revelation therein contained: The Scripture being the beſt, and in the preſent Circumſtances of Mankind, the only Means left for the Conveyance of it; I ſay, in the preſent Circumſtances, it is the only Means; for when the Circumſtances were other than they are now, or have been for Sixteen hundred Years and upwards, there was then no ſuch abſolute need of a written Word: When the Inſtructors of Mankind had their Lives protracted to a vaſt Extent, as it was with the Patriarchs of old; or when there were Inſpired Perſons alive to teach and rectify any Miſtakes that might ariſe and diſturb the Peace of the Church; as it was in the Times of the Apoſtles.

But when Things fell into an ordinary Courſe, and that fallible Perſons (as all afterwards were) might miſtake in their Reports of Doctrine, *&c.* and the weak Memories of others not retain what they had been taught, and that the inſincere would wreſt what was taught to ſerve their perverſe Deſigns; the Caſe being thus altered from Extraordinary to Ordinary, ſo was the Means of Conveyance.

And

Sermon VI.

And God, that committed the Divine Oracles to be taught by Persons whom he thought fit to inspire, employed the same Persons to commit that Revelation to Writing for the future Preservation of it, and the conveying it down safe and entire to Posterity. Without which, Mankind, in these Circumstance, neither could themselves have been certain of what they were to believe, nor could they have sufficiently proved to others what it was they were obliged to receive and to believe, as wanting Authentick Monuments and Records for it. So that we have sufficient Reason to believe, that the same Divine Goodness that did make known his Will to Mankind, would take the best Means, and did take the best Means for the continuing and preserving it.

And Scripture being the only Means of that kind, becomes a Rule of Faith; and so is of Authority sufficient to oblige us to receive and obey it.

If the Matter of Scripture be true, and of Divine Inspiration, we are obliged by it, though the Writing, or Book containing it, should be only of Human Composition; because it is the Doctrine, and not the Way of Delivery, that passes the immediate Obligation upon us: But when the Book containing that Matter, as well as the Matter it self, is of Divine Authority, and composed by Divine Appoint-

Sermon VI.

ment, Direction, or Inſpiration, it obligeth us by Virtue of the Compoſition, as well as the Matter; and both are to be jointly received, as proceeding from one and the ſame Original and Authority.

But having aſſerted this, That the Scripture is the only Means of Conveyance of the Will of God to Mankind, and what becomes a Rule of Faith to us; it is fit to return to the Queſtion propoſed, *viz.*

How we can prove the Scripture to have been of Divine Revelation; or that thoſe Books, ſo called, were wrote by the Direction and Command of God, or by Inſpiration from him?

A. 1. I Anſwer in the ſame Way as before, That as there is no Revelation, if the Scriptural Revelation be not that Revelation; ſo there is no written Revelation, if the Scripture be not that Book, and be not Inſpired. And then we ſhould want the only certain Means of Conveyance, which is Writing, or ſhould have been wholly left to the doubtful and uncertain Hand of Tradition, for the Knowledge and Preſervation of Revelation.

Now I think this to be an Argument of conſiderable Force for the Divine Authority of Scripture; that without this Means we ſhould after a Revelation be in Effect without a Revelation: For ſo it will

will be, if the Scripture contain not that Revelation, and that we have no sufficient Record, if that be not the Authentick Record of it. Sermon VI.

But to come nearer the Point:

2. I Answer, That there is as much Proof for the Inspiration of the Scripture, as the Matter is well capable of, and as much as is sufficient; and if that be so, then 'tis unreasonable to reject it; for they who do so, can do it upon no less Pretence, than that they would have such a Proof as the Matter is not capable of, and more than is sufficient for the Proof of it. But that there is such a Proof for the Divine Authority of Scripture as is sufficient, I think, will be evident, if we shew,

First, That the Scriptures have, for Proof of their Inspiration, the Testimony of such as were Inspired.

Secondly, That they were written by Persons Inspired, and that were Inspired when they writ them.

Thirdly, That they are worthy of such Authors, and have upon them the Characters of such Inspiration.

I. The Scriptures have, for Proof of their Inspiration, the Testimony of such as were Inspired. The Testimony of Per-

Sermon VI.

sons Inspired is as much a Proof of Inspiration, as if it had been a Matter they themselves were Inspired with; and therefore the Evidence that we have for the Inspiration of such Persons, is a sufficient Evidence for the Inspiration they give Testimony to. As for Instance; Suppose that we have not as good Evidence for the Inspiration of the Old Testament, as we have for the New; yet if the New doth justify the Inspiration of the Old, quotes it as such, and bestows that Character upon it; then by Virtue of such a Testimony, we have as good Evidence for the Old, as we have for the New. The meer Quotation of a Book by an Inspired Person, whether as to the Author, Words, or Matter, doth not give the like Authority to that with what he himself doth write by Divine Inspiration; for then *Aratus* and *Menander*, *Epimenides* and *Callimachus*, who were Heathens, and are quoted by St. *Paul*, would become Inspired Writers.

Acts 17. 28. 1 Cor. 15. 33. Tit. 1. 12.

But the Scriptures of the Old Testament are cited by our Saviour and the Apostles as the Oracles of God, and as Books of Divine Authority, and which they produce and appeal to upon all Occasions in Justification of the Doctrine which they taught: So we are told, that *all Scripture*, πᾶσα γραφὴ, or the whole Scripture (as *Dionysius Carthus.* expounds it) *is given by Inspiration of God.* And

2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

Sermon VI.

And what is meant by the Scripture, is no other than what was generally received by the *Jewiſh* Church as ſuch, and which our Saviour diſtributes after their Manner into the Three known Parts, *viz.* The Law of *Moſes*, the *Prophets*, and the *Pſalms*: Which Diviſion comprehended in it all the ſeveral Books; the Prophets containing not only the Books properly ſo called, but alſo the Hiſtorical, as written by Inſpired Perſons; and the Pſalms containing all the Poetical.

Luke 24. 44.

V. *Joſephus con. App. l.* 1.

And they deſcend yet lower; for of the Thirty nine Books of the Old Teſtament, there are very few, not above Seven or Eight, but what are quoted in the New Teſtament by Name, or for ſome remarkable Paſſage, and as Books of the ſame Character.

So that if we can prove our Saviour to be Infallible, and the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles Inſpired, (as we have done before, when we proved the Matter revealed by them to have been of Divine Authority) at the ſame Time we prove the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament to be of Divine Inſpiration, becauſe they had this Teſtimony and Credit given to them by thoſe that were themſelves Infallible and Inſpired.

The like Teſtimony have we for the Divine Authority of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, by St. *Peter*, who gives them the ſame Title

2 *Pet.* 3. 15, 16.

Sermon VI.

Title of *Scripture* with the Books that were of the *Jewiſh* Canon; *Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wiſdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as alſo in all his Epiſtles: -----Which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as alſo the Other Scriptures.*

But though this be a good and ſufficient Proof where it may be had, yet it is not applicable to all, ſince the laſt of the Inſpired Writers could have no ſuch Evidence; as *Malachi* among the *Jews*; and St. *John* in the Primitive Church, who ſurvived all the reſt of the Divine Penmen. And therefore, where this Proof of the Atteſtation given to ſome is wanting as to others, we muſt have Recourſe to other Arguments that will ſupply what is deficient. The Old Teſtament has the Teſtimony of the New to vouch for its Divine Authority; but what can this teſtify to the New, when there is no other Revelation, and no Inſpired Perſons to come after.

But this will be help'd by the next Evidence, which is, That

II. The Scriptures were written by Perſons Inſpired, and that were Inſpired in the Writing of them.

(1.) They were written by Perſons Inſpired: Thereby is meant, that whoever were the Authors, known or unknown,

we

we have yet good and sufficient Evidence, that the Penmen were Inspired both as to the Matter, and Manner or Way of Writing. (But this belongs to another Place). Or that the Authors of those Books were the same that before taught by Inspiration. Sermon VI.

That the Writers of the Old Testament were of this Kind, we have already proved from the Testimony of the New, as far as that is of Authority to verify it.

And that the Evangelists and Apostles, whom we have before proved to be Inspired, were the Authors of the Books of the New Testament, we have as good Assurance as the *Jews* had, that the *Pentateuch* was written by *Moses*, or the *Psalms* by *David*; or that ever there were such Philosophers as *Plato* and *Aristotle*, or such Physicians as *Hippocrates* and *Galen*, or any Books writ by them.

Nay, so much the stronger Evidence have we, as it has been the Duty (as they thought) and the Interest of so considerable a Part of Mankind as the Christians are, to preserve these Records safe and entire, and to take Care that they be such in all Points as they received them; and consequently according to their Sense of them they are of Divine Inspiration, and wrote by those Inspired Persons. And for which, there can be no greater Evidence than this Sort of Tradition; unless we would have God reveal to every particular

Sermon VI.

ticular Person, That the Authors of those Books were Inspired; or point it out by some special Miracles, which shall serve as the Star to the Wise Men, to direct us to it.

But since this is wanting, and cannot reasonably be expected, we must rest satisfied with that which is the only possible Evidence, and which not only the Primitive Christians did admit as sufficient, but was not contested by the most violent Adversaries of their Religion: Among whom the Question was not, Whether the Persons reputed to be Inspired, were the Authors of those Books? or, Whether those whose Authors are not known, were of the same Condition with those that were known? but, Whether the Matters of that supposed Revelation, and contained in those Books, were true, and that those Authors were sincere Relaters of it?

And whereas there were some Books of Scripture that were not so early and universally embraced as others, yet they were not so much doubted of as to their Authority, as the Authors (such as the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Second and Third of St. *John*, and the *Revelation*); unless it were by the *Alogi* that *Epiphanius* writes of, who rejected the Works of St. *John* as not agreeable to their Opinion, That Christ was a mere Man.

V. *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l.* 23. *c.* 24, 25. *l.* 5. *c.* 8. *l.* 7. *c.* 24, &c.

(2.) The

(2.) The Sacred Penmen were Inſpired in their Writing, in the Senſe before ſpoken of, *p.* 177. For, Sermon VI.

1. There was as much need to Write, as to Teach; to Write with Reſpect to the Abſent, and to Poſterity; as to Teach and Preach to the Preſent; for there is no other Way to Teach in thoſe Caſes, than by Tradition or Writing. But the Defect which thoſe Holy Men found all their Diſcourſes labour'd under as to their Conveyance by Tradition, through the Infirmity of Human Nature, and an Incapacity of tranſmitting the Matters now contained in the Scriptures, to future Ages in that Way, without Prejudice, Corruption, and Abuſe, diſpoſed them, under the Direction of the Holy Spirit, to commit them to Writing. So St. *John* 20. 31. *Theſe things are written that ye might believe.* So St. *Peter*, 2 Pet. 1. 5. *I will endeavour that ye may be able after my deceaſe to have theſe things always in remembrance.*

2. There was as much need to Write by Inſpiration, as to Teach by Inſpiration, for Writing is but another Way of Teaching. And if the Apoſtles had the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt in all Matters of Moment when they Taught, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe (had we no other Evidence for it) that in the ſame Circumſtances they had the ſame Aſſiſtance in what they writ. Nay,

Sermon VI.

Nay, so much the more might it reasonably be expected, that they should have the Assistance of that Divine Power operating upon their Minds, and guiding, as it were, their Pen in what they Writ; as what they Writ was to continue in the Church, and to be a Standard of Faith, and Rule of Life to all Ages: Whereas what they Taught could continue no longer than the Memories of fallible Men could retain it.

So that we may conclude, That if they Taught and Preach'd by the special Assistance of the Holy Spirit, they were also under the Conduct of it when they Writ.

3. Those Divine Penmen conceived themselves to be alike Inspired in what they Writ, as in what they Taught. Therefore we generally find the Apostles, and St. *Paul* always, unless when he writes in Conjunction with others, to begin their Epistles with a Declaration of their Commission and Authority by Virtue of their Office, *Paul an Apostle*, &c. requiring the same Regard and the like Submission to what they Writ, as to what they Spoke when present.

Phil. 1. 1. 1 & 2 *Thes.*

And as they thus magnified their Office, so they writ as from Christ himself; after this and the like Form, *Grace be to you, and peace from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. 1. 7, &c.

Nay,

Nay, they insist upon their Inspiration, which they received when they writ, to gain it Authority with those they wrote to. So St. *Paul*, Gal. 1. 1. *Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ*, &c. Ver. 11. 12. *I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after man; for I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* And that Apostle expresly saith, *The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*, 1 Cor. 14. 37. 2 Cor. 1. 13. Sermon VI.

So St. *Peter*, 1 Epist. 5. 12. *I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying, that this is the true grace of God, wherein ye stand.*

Now if they conceived themselves to be Inspired in Writing, who themselves were Inspired (as has been before proved) and did Write with the same Apostolical Authority as they Taught, it is certain that they were Inspired in Writing; for they were the best Judges of their own Inspiration, and could best know when they were Inspired. And therefore if any would undertake to disprove the Divine Authority or Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, they must first of all prove that those Writers were not Inspired, nor did ever give sufficient Evidence that they were Inspired. But if they were Inspired, and do withal declare that they wrote those Books by Inspiration, we have

Sermon VI.

have as much Reaſon to receive thoſe Books as ſuch upon their Affirmation, as we have to believe that they themſelves were Inſpired, or did ever Teach by Inſpiration.

4. There is the ſame Proof for the Inſpiration of the Apoſtical Writers, in their Writing, as their Teaching, as what they Write is the ſame with what they Taught; and therefore what they Taught being confirmed by ſufficient Evidence to be from God, ſo muſt what they Writ; the ſame Proofs that belong to the one, belonging to the other. And accordingly they in their Writings often appeal to what they Taught, as concordant with what they Writ, and to the Teſtimony given to the one for the Confirmation of the other.

They appeal to what they Taught: So St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. 2. 13. *I write none other things to you, than what you read*, or know *and acknowledge.* So Gal. 1. 8, 9. *Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other goſpel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accurſed.*

So they appeal to the Evidences of their Inſpiration in Teaching, for a Confirmation of what they Writ: So 2 *Cor.* 12. 12. *Truly the ſigns of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, and ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds.* Gal. 3. 5. *He that miniſtreth to you the Spirit, and worketh*

worketh Miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the Law, or the hearing of Faith? From whence it is that the Apostles challenge the same Regard to be paid to their Writings, as their Teaching; which they could not have done, were not their Writings of as good Authority as their Teaching, and were not they alike directed and assisted in the one as the other. So St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ*, or Apostles. 1 *Cor.* 5. 3, 4. *I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already as though I were present*, &c. *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit*, &c. Sermon VI.

All which is to give Authority to what they writ; but what Authority could that be of to oblige others to receive it, if they themselves received it not by Inspiration, and that their Teaching and Writing were not the same, and obtained in the same Way?

III. The Holy Scriptures are worthy of such Authors as were Inspired, and have upon them the Characters of such Inspiration.

I have before proved, That the Matter contained in Scripture has upon it the Characters of a Divine Revelation. But the Design before us now, is to shew, That the Writing it self has upon it such Cha- Lecture V.

Sermon VI.

Characters as will entitle it to Divine Inſpiration, and is worthy of ſuch Perſons to Write, as were Inſpired. And that,

1. If we conſider who the Perſons were that were the Penmen of the Sacred Writ; that were as well Ignorant and Illiterate, as Learned. Thus we find in the Old Teſtament, an *Amos* that was no Prophet, nor Prophet's Son, nor bred up in their Schools, but an Herdman, and Gatherer of *Sycamore*-Fruit, is made at once a Prophet, and as Inſpired, as the Great, the Noble, and Eloquent *Iſaiah*: And under the Goſpel, we find a *Matthew* and a *John*, as well as a *Luke*; a *Peter*, as well as a *Paul*. For when the Workmanſhip proceeds not from the Hand, but the Intelligent Mind; not from the Inſtrument, but the Efficient; it is not what the Hand, the Inſtrument, and Agent is, but what the Efficient pleaſes; and ſo God could make an Apoſtle and an Inſpired Perſon out of an Illiterate Fiſherman, as well as out of him that ſate at the Feet of *Gamaliel*. For *God choſe the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*, &c. *that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence*, 1 Cor. 1. 27.

Amos 7. 14.

And as it was in Preaching, ſo it is in Writing the Goſpel, in which God no leſs gave them a Mind to indite, than a Mouth

Mouth and Wisdom in Teaching to speak. So that they needed no more to meditate before what to write, than in that Case what they should answer. It was there *as the Spirit gave them utterance*, and here as that did direct, and assist, or suggest. St. *Paul* exhorts *Timothy, to give attendance to reading*, till he himself should come to give him farther Instruction; and to *meditate and give himself wholly to them, that his profiting might appear to all*, 1 Tim. 4. 13, *&c.* But we find no such Dependance on Human Means in what they wrote: Then it is *Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus, and God the Father*; the Gospel he wrote was the same he taught; and which, when he wrote, he no more received from Man, than when he taught, and which he was *taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ*, Gal. 1. 1, 11, 12.

Sermon VI. *Luke* 21. 14, 15.

And therefore where all was by Revelation, it was not as the Man was, but as he was made: And as St. *Peter* was as much an Apostle, an Inspired Teacher, so he was as much a Divine Writer as St. *Paul*, and writes with the same Divine Power and Authority, and with as much Certainty and Infallibility.

So that there are as few Objections (if we strictly consider it) made against the most Illiterate, as the most Learned of the Inspired Writers; against St. *Matthew* and

Sermon VI.

St. *John*, as againſt St. *Luke*; againſt St. *Peter*, as St. *Paul*. But now if thoſe Writers had wrote *after man* (in St. *Paul*'s Phraſe) and purely from themſelves; as it was naturally impoſſible that ever thoſe Unlearned Perſons ſhould apply themſelves to ſtudy at the Age of St. *Peter*, and write of the moſt ſublime Arguments more to the Satisfaction of Mankind than the profoundeſt Philoſophers; ſo it was impoſſible but that in their Compoſitions they ſhould have been guilty of manifold Miſtakes, when they wrote of ſuch various Points, and Points of no ſmall Difficulty to explicate. But when the Unlearned of them are as free from Error as the Learned, and as little liable to Exception in what they writ, 'tis evident they writ from the ſame Spirit with, and had the ſame Aſſiſtance as the Learned.

And therefore the ſuppoſed Errors in any of them could not proceed from Inadvertency, or Unskilfulneſs, or Want of right Information; but are rather Errors ſuppoſed and imaginary, than real; the Miſtakes of the Reader or Tranſcriber, rather than of the Penmen; as I have already ſhewed, (*Serm.* IV.)

For if the Errors had proceeded immediately from the Writer, they would have appeared more in the Compoſures of the Unlearned than the Learned: But when the Unlearned are as free from them

as

as the Learned, 'tis an unqueſtionable Sign that the Unlearned wrote from the ſame Spirit as the Learned, and both from a Spirit that is Divine. Sermon VI.

2. The Scriptures will appear to be worthy of ſuch Authors as are Inſpired, if we conſider the Way in which they are written, which though not with *excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom* that is Human, yet have ſuch a Majeſty and Authority ſhining through the Whole, as gives them a Luſtre as much beyond other Books, as the Bodies of Angels which they aſſumed for ſome ſpecial Service excelled thoſe of Mortals, and that were of a Natural Compoſition; and of which we may ſay, in the like Phraſe as *Nicodemus* of our Saviour, That none could write after this Manner, *except God were with them.* 1 *Cor.* 2. 1, 4.

I freely acknowledge, that they are not written according to the ordinary Rules of Art and Method, which Almighty God is no more obliged to obſerve, than he is to govern the World by the Methods and Rules that are ordinarily obſerved among Mankind.

For as in the Government of the World, where there are different Ends to purſue, and divers Means to be made uſe of, God confines not himſelf to act as we would in ſuch Caſes, but acts above all Rule known to us, and ſometimes puniſhes

Sermon VI.

where we would ſpare, and ſpares where we would puniſh; ſometimes gives to thoſe that we would deprive of ſuch Favours, and deprives thoſe of them to whom we ſhould think fit to give: So it is in the Divine Compoſures, in which he makes Uſe of different Hands and Inſtruments, as there are different Tempers in Mankind: He makes Uſe of the Poetical Vein in *David*, the Oratory of an *Iſaiah*, the Ruſticity of an *Amos*, the Elegancy of a *Luke*, and the Plainneſs of a *Peter*, the Profoundneſs of a *Paul*, to ſerve the common Deſign of inſtructing Mankind in the Knowledge of God, and their Duty to him, without that Artificial Method which the Learned Part of the World expect to find, and think fit to obſerve.

The Heavens and the Earth have upon them the Signatures of an Almighty Power and Wiſdom, and which we may with *David* employ our moſt ſerious Hours in the Contemplation of, with Pleaſure and Advantage. But yet there is no ſtrict Order viſible to us, nor can be obſerved by us in the Situation of the Conſtellations; nor can we give a Reaſon why *Orion* and the *Pleiades*, or *Arcturus*, are placed in that Quarter of the Heavens which is aſſigned them: And the Earth is not like a Garden laid out in Order, but rather there ſeems to us a rude Variety in the Diſpoſition of it; and yet notwithſtanding,

who

who is there that doth not, under all these seeming Disadvantages, find out the Traces of a Divine Original, and enough to entitle God to the Creation of all? And so it is in the Holy Scriptures, where there often seems wanting the Accomplishments of Human Eloquence, *the enticing word's of man's wisdom*, and that Decorum and Artifice which the Books of Human Contrivance and Invention are embellished with: But as the Apostle saith, when he declined *the words which man's wisdom* (whether of Philosophers or Orators) *teacheth*, it was that their *Faith might stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*: So we may see under the Veil of a seeming Irregularity so much Beauty shining forth, and Experiment so much Virtue proceeding from it, that it will evidently appear, that the less there is of Man in the Composure, the more there is of God, and that it can have none for its Author and Inditer but him; and which Irregularity can no more detract from the Authority and Divine Inspiration of the Scripture, than it can be questioned whether the Sun be the Fountain of Light, because of what we, that are at a vast Distance from it, call Spots. For we are at a great Distance from the Apostolical Age, and much more from the latest Times of the Inspired Writers of the Old Testament, and so must needs

Sermon VI.

1 Cor. 2. 4, 5.

Sermon VI.

be under some Difficulties from our Unacquaintedness with the Style and Way of Writing, as well as the Customs of those Ages. And there will be therefore some Spots and dark Places in them as there are in the Sun, not for Want of Light and Elegance originally in them, no more than for Want of Light in the Sun; but because of some Deficiency in our selves, that are at a Distance, and under such Circumstances as intercept our Sight, and hinder us from making true and exact Observations. But if we could but stand, as we are to judge of Pictures, in the same Light in which they were drawn, and had lived in the same Ages in which those Books were written, we should be able to make a much truer Judgment, and penetrate much farther into the Meaning of them, than we now can do.

But now though all the Parts of Scripture are not equally alike, but like the Inspired Writers themselves, of whom some were bred up in the Nurseries of Learning, and others fetch'd from the Fishery and the Sheepfold; yet are they all plain in the same essential Doctrine, and in which the Salvation of Mankind is concerned.

And not only so, but the Style and Order of Words, if throughly understood as to their Propriety, Elegance, and Use, would

would be very surprizing (if we may judge of what we do not know, by what we do); which has not been unobserved even by some of the Heathens. It was *Dionysius Longinus* the Rhetorician, that admired the Majesty and Sublimity of *Moses*'s Way of Writing. It was *Amelius* the *Platonist*, that at the same Time as he called St. *John* a *Barbarian* (a Title which the *Greeks* and *Romans* bestowed upon all but themselves), found in his Gospel the Wisdom of a Philosopher. Sermon VI. *Euseb. Præpar.*

But above all, we may see the Footsteps of a Divine and Extraordinary Assistance in the admirable Discourses of our Saviour and the Apostles upon several Occasions. Let us, for Instance, take a View of our Saviour's last Discourse with the Disciples just before his Death, as recorded by St. *John*, chap. 14. *&c.* Turn we again to that of St. *Paul* about a Future State, and a Resurrection to it, which is the Subject of 1 *Cor.* 15. See it again in the Close and sensible Argumentations of the Author to the *Hebrews*. See it also in the very Digressions which those Holy Penmen sometimes, by breaking off from their Subject in Hand for a while, do fall upon; where we shall find that which is equivalent to what is ordinarily said by the Prophets in the Messages they delivered, *Thus saith the Lord*; and what is as expressly said, and will as much be found

to

Sermon VI.

to be of Divine Revelation. It was certainly as much an Effect of the Divine Power to Direct, and Assist, and even Inspire those Writers with such sublime Notions, such convincing Arguments, as it was of the Divine Commission to send the Prophets with Authority to publish the Divine Commands and Decrees. And therefore it is a very frivolous Exception which a late Author makes against the Divine Authority of the Apostolical Writings, That they consist of long Deductions and Argumentations; whereas, saith he, *God doth not reason, but command*, as he did by the Prophets. But how often do we find in the Prophets God arguing with the *Jews* about the Vanity of their Idolatry, from the Incomprehensible Perfections of his Nature, *&c.*? How often using Arguments to convince them of their Immoralities and Impieties? How often exhorting them to Repentance and Reformation, from the most powerful Considerations? And therefore why are the Apostles less inspired for that Reason than the Prophets? When God speaks to Men, and teaches one Man by another, it is often after the Manner of Men; and therefore as he doth sometimes require absolute Obedience to his Commands, so at other Times he condescends so far as to shew them the Equity and the Reasonableness of them, both equally becoming the Di-

Theol. Polit. c. 8.

vine

vine Majesty, and which are a glorious Instance of the Divine Wisdom conspicuous throughout the Holy Scripture; thereby adding both to the Excellency and the Usefulness of it; and advancing it in both above any Book in the World. And for this, take the Word of one (who is otherwise no Friend to our Religion, or to the Divine Authority of the Scriptures) though in Contradiction to himself. Sermon VI. *Anima Mundi*, Sect. 1.

"As the Lustre of an Oriental Diamond is more clearly perceived, when "compared with counterfeit Stones; so "Christianity appears in its greatest Glory and Splendor, when compared with "the Obscurity of Paganism; the Deformity of the one serving as a Foil to "the other. Nor doth the Divinity of "the Scriptures ever better appear, than "when compared with the Follies of the "*Talmud*, the *Alchoran*, or the Constitutions of the Heathen Lawgivers; which "is an infallible Sign of their Excellence, "that they so well bear the Test of Comparison. Thus far he.

IV. *General.*

How we prove the Books that are now extant, and received by the Christian Church as Canonical, to be those very Books that were writ by Persons Inspired?

Now

Sermon VI.

Now this will receive a ſufficient Anſwer, if we prove,

1. That there were once ſuch Books.

2. That theſe are the very Books which were once ſaid to be Canonical and Inſpired.

3. That theſe Books are not corrupted, ſo as not to be the Books now which once they were.

1. The Firſt of theſe is not denied by the moſt violent Adverſaries, ſuch as *Appion* was to the *Jews*, and *Celſus* to the *Chriſtians*.

2. That theſe are the Books which were heretofore Penn'd by Inſpired Perſons, and received by the Univerſal Church as ſuch, we have as much Evidence as we have or can have for any Thing paſt or diſtant in Time or Place from us, and which we our ſelves have not ſeen: And if we call in queſtion the Sufficiency of the Evidence, or the Truth of what is proved by it, we take away all the Evidence that we can have, and the Truth and Certainty of whatever has been, or is, which we have not ſeen our ſelves. So that either theſe are thoſe Books, or there is nothing of that Kind which we can depend upon.

3. Theſe Books are uncorrupted; I mean, by Deſign, or Accident.

If by Deſign, it muſt either be by *Jews*, *Hereticks*, or thoſe that are called *Orthodox*.

1. If

1. If by the *Jews*, that must either be before the Time of our Saviour, or after it. If before, they would have certainly been taxed for it by our Saviour and the Apostles, who upon all Occasions appeal to the Scriptures; and yet never charge them with any such Falsifications. Sermon VI.

If they were corrupted by the *Jews* after our Saviour's Time, How came they to leave those Prophecies uncorrupted, which manifestly and principally prove our Saviour to be the Messiah? For surely if they adulterated, or expunged, or added to the less, they would have offered as much Violence to the greater. But it is evident the *Jews* were in a high Degree superstitious, in preserving the Copies of the Scripture sound and entire. V. *Hieron. in 6. Isa.* V. *Philo de Egressu Israel. ex Ægypto.*

Or if they would have attempted this, how could they do it, and not be discovered and challenged for it by the Christians, who from that Time forward had the Scriptures of the Old Testament in their Custody, as well as themselves?

2. It could not be by the Hereticks, because the Scriptures were soon dispersed over all the Christian World, and were read both in publick and private; and with that Care and Faithfulness, that they chose rather to part with their Lives, than become *Traditores*, and deliver up their Bibles to be burnt; and keeping then so watchful an Eye upon them, they could not

Sermon VI.

not be perverted by their fraudulent Arts, but they would soon be observed and complained of; especially by those whose Office it was above others to study and preserve them.

Irenæus, l. 1. c. 29. Tertul. contra Marcion. l. 5. Epiphan. Hær. 42.

So when *Marcion* falsified the Text, he was presently detected and exposed for it.

3. Nor could it be by the Orthodox, if any of them were so weak as to think to serve their Cause by it: For as to the Old Testament, they were as watchfully observed by the *Jews*, as the *Jews* were by them; and both the Copies of the Old and New were so soon and so far dispersed, that neither could any one attempt it with any Likelihood of Success, nor all agree in it, when impossible to convene for it.

And therefore when *Manichæus* and his Followers pretended the Corruption of the Scripture in their own Vindication, they could not make out their Charge, though provoked by St. *Austin*, &c. to it.

Aug. de util. Cred. c. 3.

Use. We may observe from hence, what a Blessing we enjoy above the Ages of Tradition, when the Knowledge of the Truth was conveyed from Hand to Hand; which so sensibly declined, that the Truth was soon turned into Fable, and that so few Years after the Flood as the Time of *Terah*, the greatest Part of the World was over-run with Idolatry;

so

so that for the retrieving it, God drew *Abraham* out of that infected Mass, and enjoined him to set up a Family separated from the rest of the World, that out of that he might constitute a Church for his Service. Sermon VI.

But we have that which those Ages wanted, a written and certain Rule for our Faith and Manners; and that so plainly and intelligibly wrote, and so compleatly and entirely furnished with all Things necessary for us to know, in order to the Happiness of another Life; that as none in the Christian Church (where the Guides and Teachers are faithful to their Flock) can be, or must unavoidably be ignorant; so neither can any Person be defective in the Knowledge of his Duty, or void and destitute of a Power of doing what is necessary towards his Happiness, unless by his own Fault. If we keep but to our Rule, that is as an Infallible Compass to direct us, and we shall never fall short of knowing what God has revealed, or of obtaining what he hath promised.

And here we may farther reflect upon our Happiness in this Church, that we have not the *Key of Knowledge* taken from us, and the Truth lock'd up in an Unknown Tongue (as in the Church of *Rome*), but plainly and faithfully rendred

in

Sermon VI.

in our own Language, for the Instruction and Edification of all.

What remains then, but that we make this our daily Study, and labour to acquaint our selves with the Rich Treasures of Useful and Necessary Knowledge contained in those Sacred Repositories, and making them as *David* did, a *Lamp to our feet*, and endeavouring to conform our selves in all Points to their holy Prescriptions; and then we shall most certainly have Reason to rejoice in the Comfort of the Promises, and with Patience *look for that blessed hope and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

To whom, *&c.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

HEB. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unus by his Son, &c.

IN theſe words we have (as I have before ſhewed)

1. A deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

2. The Certainty of that Revelation, 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at ſundry times*, &c. *ſpake*.

3. The Order obſerved in that Revelation, as to Time, Manner, and Perſons; *In time paſt by the Prophets*, and *in the laſt days by his Son*.

Sermon VII.

4. The Perfection and Completion of all, 'tis *in theſe laſt days by his Son.*

It's the Third that I am at this time to enter upon; *viz.*

The Order obſerved in that Revelation, *&c.*

Where, according to the Method laid down in the beginning of theſe Lectures,

1. I am to conſider the ſeveral ways by which God did reveal himſelf *in time paſt by the Prophets*; as by Inſpirations, Viſions, *&c.*

2. I am to ſhew the difference between Divine Inſpirations on one hand, and Diabolical Illuſions, Natural Impreſſions, and Deluſory Imaginations on the other.

3. I am to conſider the ſeveral Periods of Divine Revelation, before the Law, under the Law, and under the Goſpel; and the gradual Progreſs of it from firſt to laſt, from the lower to the higher degree, and the perpetual reſpect one had to the other.

4. I am to ſhew why God did thus gradually, and at *ſundry times*, proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind, and not at firſt and at once, as fully and perfectly as he did at laſt *by his Son.*

1. I am to conſider the ſeveral Ways by which God did reveal himſelf in time paſt by the Prophets.

When

When we are treating of Revelation, we are to consider that it is like Light, to be known by it self; and that the best way therefore is to take the Scripture it self for our Guide in the matters belonging thereunto; without which, how Learnedly soever Men may discourse upon this Argument, 'tis to as little purpose as if we should go about to compile a History of the Invisible World, and of all the Transactions in it from time to time, which we have no Conversation nor Acquaintance with. Sermon VII.

We see how Vain (though Ingenious) the Attempts of many Inquisitive Persons have been, notwithstanding the Improvements by Telescopes, *&c.* for their assistance, to give us any tolerable Account of the Solar and Lunary Worlds; and after much and indefatigable Pains, they are not able to say, this is Land, and that Water; or whether neither of the two.

And we talk as much at random, when we leave the beaten Track of Scripture, and think to find out by our own Reason what we must understand by Revelation alone. We can only think and discourse of such Subjects, as we keep that Clue in our hand; and therefore laying aside all manner of Conjectures, and the Spe-

culations of the *Jewish* or *Christian Rabbies* upon the Argument in hand, I shall solely keep my self to the Rule of Scripture.

Sermon VII.

All I pretend, is to compare Scripture with it self, and to try if by putting these things together, and laying them in order, I can contribute any thing to the Explication of so obscure and intricate an Argument.

There are several Terms made use of in Scripture with reference to this Subject, and for the signification of the way by which God did reveal and make himself known to Mankind; and they are, *Inspiration*, *Vision*, *Dreams*, and *Voices*.

1. *Inspiration.* So *Job* [32. 8.] saith, *The inspiration of the Almighty gave them* [men] *understanding*.

And the Scripture is said to have been given *by Inspiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Now it seems to be called Inspiration, because it is insensibly communicated and breathed as it were into the Soul, as the Soul was into the Body; to which the Phrase in *Job* has a plain reference, where the same word נְשָׁמָה is used, which is used *Gen.* 2. 7. when God is said to *breathe into* Adam *the breath of Life*: And by which term it is properly and evidently distinguished from all the other Species

Species of Divine Communications. For all the rest are sensible ways, whether by Representation, as Visions or Dreams; or by Action, as Voices; but this comes as Life came into the Body, or Air comes into the Lungs, without any such kind of Perception or Sensation. Sermon VII.

Now there is a Threefold Inspiration;

(1.) That which is purely Natural: So 'tis said of God, *who hath put wisdom into the inward parts*, Job 38. 36. And he is said to *instruct the plowman to discretion*, Isa. 28. 26. This is no other than a Disposition infused, and connatural with the Soul it self; and that afterward in process of time ripens, and comes to be a Power or Principle, and even a Habit, by action and observation.

(2.) There is a Providential Inspiration; when God by some After-Act of his Providence, and for some special Service, doth either give Life to such a Natural Power and inherent Disposition, or else infuses a new Disposition or Power into the Soul. This seems to have been the Case of *Bezaleel*, and *Aholiab*, and others, into whom God is said to have *put wisdom and understanding*, to know how to work all manner of Work; and yet of the same Persons 'tis said, whose Exod. 31. 3, &c.

Sermon VII.

heart stirred them up, Exod. 36. 1, 2. That is, God did chuse them out, as being of themselves well disposed and fitted for that Employment, and after an Extraordinary Manner, and by a Supernatural Assistance qualified them farther for it. And from the Consideration of the difference between Men and Men, and indeed between a Man and himself, when from some imperceptible beginning he comes to advance beyond others, and even beyond himself in Knowledge, Wisdom, and Success, the World has been inclin'd to think there was somewhat of a peculiar Inspiration in it. Whence that Saying of the Heathen Orator, *Nemo Vir Magnus sine afflatu Divino unquàm fuit:* No one ever came to be a Great Man, or attained to any extraordinary Eminence in Knowledge or Skill, but by a Divine Illumination.

Cic. l. 2. de Nat. Deor.

(3.) There is an Inspiration purely Supernatural; that is immediately, wholly, and only from God. Of this sort is that Divine Influx commonly known by the term of *Regeneration*, when God so changes the Heart by the Powerful Operation of his Holy Spirit, that it's said to be New, *Ezek.* 36. 26.

But that which is more to our purpose, is when God in *Daniel*'s Phrase, *ch.* 2. 22. *reveal-*

revealeth the deep and secret things; and doth communicate his Will, so that the Person conceives, and thinks, and acts, as the Divine Power would have him conceive, think, and act. Sermon VII.

It being here, as with the Soul in the Body, which is the Principle of all Vital Motion; for though the Body be in its contrivance admirably adapted for all Offices to which the Organs of it are to serve, if there were a Soul in it; yet it is the Soul that must make the Eye to see, and the Foot to move, and the Tongue to speak, or else there will be no Sight, Motion, nor Speech.

So it is here in Divine Inspiration of this sort, where the Spirit of God is to the Soul, what the Soul is to the Body, and must make all those Impressions upon it, must infuse the Power of conceiving and thinking, or rather those Conceptions and Thoughts, those Notions and Ideas of Things, nay, that Matter. So that the Person inspired doth not think his own Thoughts, nor order his own Conceptions, nor form his own Notions, nor use his own Words (where these are Inspired) as far as he is Inspired. Not that his Reason is not in operation, (as it is in Raptures, Visions, and Dreams, where the Rational Powers are bound up

as it were by Sleep for the preſent), but
Sermon that theſe Infuſions proceeding not from
VII. any Reaſoning in themſelves, but from an External and Supernatural Cauſe, it is by that Cauſe determined to the Matter that is Inſpired.

As a Prompter doth ſuggeſt the Matter, or dictate the Words to the Interpreter he makes uſe of; which are not to be eſteemed the Words or Thoughts of the Interpreter, but of the Suggeſter. As our Saviour ſaith to his Diſciples, *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it ſhall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak: For it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of the Father which ſpeaketh in you.* Matth. 10. 19, 20.

Now as it was the Spirit of God ſpeaking in them, that did in that caſe dictate and guide them in all they ſaid, ſo that they ſpake with ſuch Authority and Ability, ſuch Wiſdom and Elocution, without any Premeditation, as all their Adverſaries were not able to *gainſay or reſiſt*, Luke 21. 15. (as we find in the Inſtance of St. *Stephen*, Acts 6. 10.)

So it was after the ſame manner that the Divine Spirit did breathe upon the mind (as our Saviour on the Apoſtles in an external way, the ſignification of the internal,

internal, *John* 20. 22.) in a way imperceptible; and did so insinuate it self, that it became, as it were, one Spirit with theirs, and they thought as the Spirit disposd them to think, as well as spake as *the Spirit gave them utterance*, Acts 2. 4. This was thinking and speaking by Inspiration: And this being the most eminent way of God's communicating his Will to Mankind, is call'd Revelation in the New Testament especially, it being immediate, without the intervention of Visions, or Extasies, or Voices, or any other means than it self; and this was the way by which the Apostles received their Revelation, called a Revealing by *the Spirit*. Sermon VII. Rom. 16. 25, 26. Gal. 1. 12. 1 Cor. 2. 10. Ephes. 3. 3, 5, 6. 1 Thes. 4. 8.

2. Another way by which God revealed himself, was Vision, or Sight. This was so common, that all the ways of Revelation are sometimes set forth by this term.

A Vision is the Representation of an Object, as in a Glass which places the Visage before us; and by which we have as clear a view of the things thus represented, as if they were the things themselves, and not the Images or appearances of them.

And therefore though the external Senses are herein bound up, and, as it were,

were, laid aſleep in a Trance; yet the things preſented at that time to the imagination, and intended as a Revelation of ſomething to happen or to be done, are as plain, and evident, as ſenſible Objects that lie open to the Senſe. Thus *Balaam* deſcribes it as to himſelf, *who ſaw the viſion of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open*, Numb. 24. 16. that is, though he had not the exerciſe of his outward Senſes; and ſo his Eyes were of no more uſe to him when open than if they were ſhut, yet he evidently ſaw whatever was preſented to his mind. Thus St. *Paul* as clearly ſaw our Saviour by a Repreſentation or Viſion, when he was in a Trance in the Temple, as he did when he actually and viſibly appear'd to him at Mid-day on the way to *Damaſcus*.

Sermon VII.

Acts 22. 17, 18. Acts 9. 4. c. 26. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 8.

In this caſe things imaginary are as if they were real, remote as if they were near, future as if preſent, and ſecret as if open; that is, what ſight, preſence, and knowledge is to us in things ſenſible when we are awake, and have a full exerciſe of our outward Senſes; that is Viſion to the Viſionaries, to ſuch as are in an Extaſy.

This will be farther illuſtrated by a reflection upon theſe ſeveral particulars;

to

to which (if I mistake not) all the instances of this kind may be reduced. Sermon VII.

As

1. In Vision things imaginary and internal are represented as evidently as if they were real and external. Thus much is intimated in the case of St. *Peter*; of whom 'tis said, when the Angel smote him, and the chains fell off from his hands, *he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.* From whence it follows, that all this (which he found to be real when he came to himself) might have been represented by way of Vision; and things thereby represented are as evidently proposed to the Mind, as outward Objects can be to the Eye. Thus it was with the same Apostle when he fell into a Trance, and *saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth,* &c. *Acts* 10. 10, &c. Of this kind of Vision, were *Jeremiah*'s wearing a linen Girdle, and his hiding it afterwards in a hole by *Euphrates*; and his taking a cup of fury at the Lord's hand, and causing all Nations to drink of it. Of the same kind were *Ezekiel*'s eating of &c.

Acts 12. 9.

Jerem. 13. 1, &c. 25. 15.

Ezek. ch. 3, 4, 5.

Sermon VII.

of the Roll, his typical laying Siege to *Jeruſalem*, and an hundred things more in that and other Prophetical Books.

In which caſes, when the things repreſented are wholly imaginary, and never exiſtent, what is in Phraſe poſitively ſaid of them, is to be ſupplied with *as it were*; as in the aforeſaid Viſion of St. *Peter*, when it is ſaid *Peter ſaw heaven opened, and a ſheet deſcending*, &c. it being not a thing really done, but only by Repreſentation, it is to be underſtood, That he, *as it were*, ſaw Heaven opened.

2. In Viſion things remote are repreſented as near and preſent, and the Viſionary has all the advantage of ſight in things preſented to the Eye without the uſe of ſight, or change of place. So *Ezekiel*, when a Captive in *Chaldæa*, had the ſtate of *Jeruſalem* (as it was then in fact) ſet before him; whither he was brought *in the viſions of God*, and as evidently ſaw all things that were at that time tranſacted in the Temple, as if he had been actually there: And even the ſecret practices of the Elders and Prieſts in the moſt retired corners were at that diſtance exactly repreſented to him; ſo that if he had been perſonally with them, they had not been more viſible to him.

Ezek. 1. 1. & 8. 3. &c.

There

There he beheld the Idols pourtrayed on the wall; and the Seventy Men, or *Sanhedrim*, and *Jaazaniah* their Head, in the midst of them, with every Man his Censer in his hand, and all the particulars as there described. Sermon VII.

3. In Vision, things future are as evidently represented, as if they were present. Thus *Saul* when deprived of his Sight, saw in a Vision *Ananias* coming in, and by Imposition of hands restoring him to it; and by which means, as described to him before-hand, he as perfectly knew *Ananias*, when he came to see, as if he had afore time been conversant with him. From whence we may observe: Acts 9. 12.

(1.) That Vision is Supernatural; so in the Old Testament, *Ezekiel* saith, *The hand of the Lord was upon me.* And in the New, St. *John* saith, He was *in the Spirit.* Ezek. 8. 1. Revel. 1. 10.

(2.) That it is Internal; when the Soul, tho' in the Body, yet for the present is as out of it, as to corporeal Sensations, and sees, perceives and understands nothing by the external organs. Thus it was with St. *Paul* in his wonderful Rapture, when his Soul was in such an abstracted and elevated state, that he himself could not tell, whether he was *in the body or out of the body.* 2 Cor. 12. 1, 2.

So

Sermon VII.

So that when the Name of Vision is given in Scripture to this way of Divine Communication, it is not from any use made of corporeal sight, or that it is entertain'd with any external objects; but because of the clearness and evidence of it, and a conformity it therein bears to outward and corporeal Sense.

By which it is distinguished from external Representations, (which were also very frequent in those times of Revelation) of which there were two sorts more especially, *viz.*

(1.) That which the *Jews* call the *Shechinah*, which was God's manifestation of himself in a visible Glory and Majesty, without any form, as he did to the Patriarchs; and afterwards it was the token of his special residence among his people the *Jews*, called therefore his *dwelling between the cherubins.*

Gen. 17. 1, &c.

Psal. 80. 1.

(2.) Another way of appearance was by Angels, when they took upon them a humane form, by way of condescension to mankind, and for a freer conversation with them; and from which form and umbrage, the Scripture terms them *Men:* but, besides what the Sequel of Scripture and common Sense shews, the Apostle hath taught us that they were Divine Messengers sent immediately from God,

Gen. 18. 1, 2. ch. 19. 1. Hebr. 13. 2.

upon especial occasions and emergencies. But the *Shechinah*, called *The Glory of the Lord*, was a Manifestation of the Divine Presence, and not a Revelation; and the Angels were only Messengers of a Revelation: And so neither of them belong properly to this place. Sermon VII. Num. 16. 42, &c.

3. Another way of Revelation was by Dreams. There is so far an agreement between Vision and Dreams, that in both the external Senses were bound up, so that a Vision may be called a supernatural Dream, and a Dream may be said to be a natural Vision; and so in *Job* they seem to be taken for one and the same. *God speaketh in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbrings upon the bed.* But the Scripture otherwise usually speaks of them as two distinct ways of Revelation: So *Num.* 12. 6. *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.* So *Joel* 2. 28. And the difference between them seems to be, Job 33. 14, 15. ch. 4. 13.

(1.) That Vision properly speaking was generally, if not always, when the Visionary was awake, whether by night or day; but Dreams (as the nature of the thing shews) were, when the external Senses were asleep; and Reason,

as

as to its present operation, was bound Sermon up with them.

VII. (2.) In a Vision the whole was supernatural, without any humane predispotion or concurrence, as the Scripture-phrase doth shew, (as St. *John* was said to be *carried in the spirit into the wilderness*, and a Trance is said *to fall upon* St. *Peter*:) But to dream, is a natural Motion of the Spirits, and Disposition of Body, which the Spirit of God, or an Angel (the usual Minister employ'd in such conveyances) made use of; both as the Mind was then in a state of Repose, and by the Rest of the Body relaxed from the business of the day; and also as what was suggested in that way, made a stronger impression upon the Mind, when not diverted by outward objects and occasions, and that there was a cessation from all external and sensible operations. For it seemed necessary (naturally speaking) that in all Revelations there should be a sedate disposition of Mind, and an abstraction from all other Conceptions; and therefore it was either found so, as in Dreams, or made so by some Angelical and Divine Operation, as in a Vision or Trance. In both the Senses were therefore bound up; but in a Vision, by a supernatural Agency; in Sleep or Dreams,

Rev. 17. 3. ch. 21. 20. Acts 10. 10. ἐπέπεσεν ἐπ' αὐτὸν

Dreams, by the mere effect of Nature.

Sermon VII.

And if it be aſked, How then is there a Revelation by Dream, when Revelation is ſupernatural, and a Dream natural?

I anſwer; Though it be as natural to dream as to ſleep, and a Dream is a Conſequent, if not a conſtant Concomitant of Sleep; yet in this caſe (which we are ſpeaking of) the Revelation or Dream was ſupernatural. As to think or ſpeak is natural to Man; but ſo to think or ſpeak as is above the capacity of the Agent, and what he of himſelf could never have thought or ſpoken, ſhews that he is not ſo much an Agent as a Recipient, and the Inſtrument made uſe of in the conveyance. Thus it was no more natural for *Balaam* ſeveral Ages before, to foretel *what the children of* Iſrael *ſhould do to the* Moabites *in the latter days*, than it was for his Aſs to ſpeak.

Numb. 24. 14.

So to dream is natural, but to dream of ſuch things then in doing, or of ſuch things to come as are altogether independent on the Body, nor by any methods of Nature or preſumptive Art to be known or foreſeen, is ſupernatural. Thus to dream was natural to *Pharaoh*,

Sermon VII.

as to others; and his Dream of the Seven fat and lean Kine, might have pass'd for the fruit of a nocturnal Imagination; but by a Dream to be made understand, that there should be successively seven Years of great Plenty, and then seven Years of Famine, could proceed only from a Divine Revelation.

Gen. 41. 1, &c.

And this will farther appear in the process of this Discourse, when I am to consider the difference between what is Natural, and what is Divine, *&c.*

4. Another sort of Revelation was by Voice, and that by way of immediate communication, or occasional. The former of these was vouchsafed to *Abraham*, and above all to *Moses*; to whom God is said to have spoken *face to face, as a Man speaketh unto his friend.*

Exod. 33. 9, 11.

By which He is distinguished from all other Prophets, and preferr'd above them, as it is recorded, *Numb.* 12. 6, 7, 8. *If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant* Moses *is not so,* &c. *With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.*

That

That Revelation to him was after the way of communication, open and clear, as a Friend converses with a Friend; and whenever he had occasion to know the mind of God, he went to the place where he might be sure to meet him, that is, into the Tabernacle, and there he *heard the voice of one speaking unto him from between the two cherubims*; Numb. 7. 89. Sermon VII.

Next to this, was the continuance of that Oracle among the *Jews*, to which the High-Priest repair'd in any difficulties; but how far the Divinity did communicate it self in that way, the Scripture is not positive. We find that it was with-held in the time of *Saul*; for when he enquired of the Lord, 'tis said, *The Lord answer'd him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by Prophets*, nor by any other way. 1 Sam. 28. 6.

There was another sort of Voice, which was altogether occasional, and proceeded from the *magnificent Glory*, in St. *Peter*'s Phrase; and was for some particular direction, as to *Hagar*, to *Abraham*, &c. or for testimony and confirmation, as was that the Apostle speaks of, when it was audibly proclaim'd from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* 2 Pet. 1. 17.

Sermon VII.

Thus far I have treated of the several ways of Revelation recorded in the Holy Scripture, and in which God spake *in time past by the Prophets*. There was one more which the *Jews* of latter Ages speak of, and would have continued, after the other were discontinued, called by them the *Bath Col*, or the *Low Voice*; and which after a sort they conceive was to supply the deficiency of the other; but that is beside my present purpose, having confined my self to Scripture alone.

Where also we find nothing observ'd or allow'd of another way, which the Heathenish World abounded in, and by which they thought the success and event of any design they had in hand might be learned, and that was Divination. When by the Air or Earth, the flight or feeding of Birds, the Entrails of Beasts, *&c.* they might judge of the way they were to take, or the event of their proceedings, as did the King of *Babylon*. A Pretence foolish enough, and which we can make no better a use of, than to observe how desirous the World has always been of a Revelation, how sensible of the need of a farther direction, than what mere Nature or Reason did dictate; and withal, how foolish Mankind was under the want of it. For how can it be suppos'd that Futurities should

Ezek. 21. 21, 22.

ſhould be dependent upon ſuch ſorry Accidents, or that the Divinity ſhould thus reveal it ſelf? Therefore it is no wonder to find the true Revelation ſo ſilent as to theſe ludicrous matters; and if we had there found ſuch an Order of Men eſtabliſhed by that, as were the *Augurs*, *Haruſpices*, and *Extiſpices* among the Heathens, and ſuch Rules as thoſe had for to guide them in their obſervations according to that ſenſleſs Art; it would be a better Argument againſt the Authority of ſuch a Revelation, than ever yet has been or can be advanced againſt it by its greateſt Enemies. No! theſe are juſtly reckon'd among the Abominations of the Heathen, and forbidden to the *Jews*, viz. *There ſhall not be found among you any one*, &c. *that uſeth divination, or an obſerver of times, or an inchanter, or a charmer, or a conſulter with a familiar ſpirit; for all that do theſe things, are an abomination unto the Lord.* Sermon VII. Deut. 18. 10, &c.

But now granting that the Deity did make known and communicate his Will in the ways before ſpoken of, of Inſpiration, Viſion, Dreams and Voices; yet there remains a great difficulty behind, and that is, How we may be ſatisfied about the truth and certainty of ſuch a Revelation? And that becauſe as there

Sermon VII.

are Supernatural Visions, Voices and Dreams, so there are Natural; as Divine, so Humane; as Real, so Imaginary on one hand, and Pretence on the other: And therefore how shall we distinguish the Supernatural, from the Natural; the Divine, from the Humane; the Real, from the Imaginary and Pretended? And how know we, but that what we call a Divine Inspiration, Vision, Dream and Voice, may be Natural and Humane, may be Imaginary, Enthusiastical and Suppositititious? The persons may say as those, *Jer.* 23. 25. *I have dreamed, I have dreamed*; and yet it be a *Vision of their own heart.* Or that there may *be a lying spirit in the mouth of the Prophets*, as *Micaiah* said of those in his time, 1 *Kings* 22. 22.

This brings to the second:

2. To consider the difference between Divine Communications, Natural Impressions, and Diabolical Illusions; whether by Inspiration or Vision, Dreams or Voices.

In the resolution of which Case, it is not my design to discourse nicely, after a philosophical manner; as about the force of Imagination, and the influence invisible Agents have upon Mankind; for that is to go a great way about, without coming

coming nearer the Point than when we first set out; and is not to be done, without knowing what we pretend not to know. Sermon VII.

I don't question but that if we had an immediate Intuition into the state of the Mind, or the operations upon it, we might discern as plain a difference between Temper and Inspiration, Imposture and Revelation, as between day and night; or as there is between an Angel of light, and an Angel of darkness, to such as are in the invisible state.

But these things are alike unknown to us; only this we may say, That Divine Inspiration is discover'd as Light, by it self; and which the Person divinely moved and illuminated is as much assured of, as he is of the existence of any thing in being, or the truth of any Proposition, as has been before said. And when the Divine Power operates, it hath so much the Ascendant over the natural Temper, that it lays a Person under an uncontroulable necessity of obeying the Dictates of it, as it was with the Prophets of old. Serm. III. p. Jer. 20. 9. Ezek. 3. 14.

But if it be said, Don't we see Enthusiastical Persons as confident of their Imaginary Inspirations and Visions, and look upon themselves as much obliged to

follow them, as thoſe that are truly In-
Sermon ſpired do to obey what is Divine?

VII. I anſwer, Be it ſo; yet this is of it ſelf no Argument againſt the truth and certainty of Revelation, and of Revelation in thoſe ways. Is it any Argument againſt the certainty of Senſe, that it is often deceived and impoſed upon? Or againſt Truth, that there are Errors and everlaſting Diſputes among Mankind? And becauſe there are, are we all obliged to be Scepticks; and may we be poſitive that there is no Truth nor Certainty in the World; and that no Man can be ſure he ſees, or hears, or knows, or lives? And becauſe there are, or have been deluded and brain-ſick Perſons, are therefore none wiſe, or in their Wits?

And are all Inſpired Perſons no more to be credited than if they were Lunaticks? Or don't they know themſelves to be any more Inſpired, than thoſe that are agitated by the power of a wild Imagination? Confidence in imaginary Inſpirations may be great; but the Perception, and ſo the Aſſurance cannot be alike to what is real. But tho' the Deity can ſo communicate it ſelf, as that the Perſon inſpired ſhall know moſt certainly, it is from God, and from him alone; and ſo there is no abſolute ne-

ceſſity

ceſſity of any farther evidence to him, no more than there is of Light to give evidence to Light: Yet that there might nothing be wanting for the farther ſatisfaction of ſuch as had a Revelation, there was often added ſome ſign, or ſupernatural proof. So when *Gideon* had ſome doubt of what the Angel ſaid, (when he knew not what he was) and was timerous, when requir'd to go on a difficult Enterprize; he was confirmed, by the Fire out of the Rock that conſumed the Fleſh; and by the Fleece; and the Soldier's Dream, and the Interpretation of it. Sermon VII. Judges 6. 21, 37. 7. 13, 14.

And *Moſes* was convinced not only of his own Miſſion from God, but of the acceptance and authority he ſhould upon it have with the People, when the Rod in his Hand was turned into a Serpent; and his Hand, by putting it into his Boſom, was made leprous, and cured again in a moment, by taking it out. Exod. 4. 3, 6.

A courſe altogether neceſſary, for the ſatisfaction of others, (as has been before obſerved) and which may reaſonably be demanded. For if a Perſon ſhall come, under the pretence of a Revelation, with a Meſſage to others, and require them, as they tender their Salvation, to receive it, and to ſubmit to it, Serm. III. p.

without

Sermon VII.

without such Certificates as shall give Authority to it; it is like one that shall take on him the Style and Character of an Ambassador, without any Credentials to give him Authority, and deserves no better acceptance. Let then a *Moses* come with a Message to *Pharaoh* in the Name of God, and require him to obey it; that Prince might reasonably expect a farther confirmation than his Word, and it must be somewhat truly great and greater than what was done by his Magicians, that should determine him to a belief of it.

Exod. 8. 18.

Let *Elijah* confront *Ahab*, and the Priests of *Baal*, and they dispute his Mission and Authority; he appeals to the Supreme Authority to decide it, *The God that answereth by fire, let him be God.*

1 Kings 18. 24, 36.

Let a *lying Spirit* be put in the Mouth of the other Prophets in opposition unto *Micaiah*, that Prophet, for the Conviction of all, leaves it to the event, saying unto *Ahab*, *If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O People, every one of you.*

1 Kings 22. 28.

By this means, that is, by Predictions and Miracles, a Prophet may be known to be a Prophet, and an Inspiration to be

be an Inſpiration; and by theſe Characters may we be able to judge of both; as to the Authority of the Miſſion, and the Truth of the Inſpiration. Where the Evidence was neceſſary, there was never wanting one or both of theſe. And though *John* did no Miracle, yet he had the Spirit of Prophecy, the People acknowledged, for ſaid they, *All things* John *ſpake of this Man* [*Jeſus*] *were true.* There may, 'tis likely, be Inſpiration where there is neither of theſe, nor the like Evidences; but there is no obligation on others to believe it, without the Evidence be ſufficient; (for ſuch as the Evidence is, ſuch is the Obligation) but the Evidence is not ſufficient which reſts ſolely on Humane Authority, and has nothing but the bare word and affirmation of the Pretender to prove it. To this purpoſe, ſaith our Saviour, *If I bear witneſs of my ſelf, my witneſs is not true* ——— *The works that I do, bear witneſs of me.* So that Inſpiration is, as to others, no Inſpiration, till it be proved: It may, for ought appears to the contrary, be no other than Deluſion, or Impoſture. Let therefore the Imagination be never ſo ſtrong, the Confidence never ſo great, the Intent never ſo good; the Queſtion is, Whence

Sermon VII.

John 10. 41.

John 5. 31, 36.

is

is this, what Evidence doth the Person bring of his Mission from God? Upon what doth it rest? Into what is it resolved? What doth he produce more than what may be the fruit of Imagination? It may all be a fit of Enthusiasm. So that if a Person will pretend to immediate Inspiration, (were it an Age for it) and much more, pretend to it after Inspiration has ceased; he must be able to fortify it by such Evidence as can come from none but him from whom the Inspiration came, if it be Divine.

Sermon VII.

So much for Inspiration, in opposition to Natural Impressions and Diabolical Illusions; and which may serve as a general Answer to the other particular Instances that remain.

Thus it was in Visions; which as to the Visionaries was with that Evidence, as could leave no manner of doubt of what was therein represented. So *Micaiah* describes his Vision, *I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of Heaven standing by him, on his right hand, and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade* Ahab, *that he may go up and fall at* Ramoth-Gilead? *&c.* And by this as he himself did abide, so the Event verified it, *vers.* 34.

1 Kings 22. 19.

The

The ſame is to be ſaid as to Dreams, which had ſuch a peculiar ſtroke upon the Imagination, that the *Divine* had a different effect upon the Perſon from what was *Natural*; and therefore *Abimelech*, before he had expoſtulated the Caſe with *Abraham*, communicated his Dream to his Family, from the confidence he had in himſelf of the truth of it. Sermon VII. Gen. 20. 3.

And eſpecially has this a ſufficient Evidence as to others.

1. When ſuch things are therein diſcover'd, which they had before no knowledge of; as was the Caſe of *Abimelech*.

Or 2. Which were ſo remote in Place, or Time, as none could poſſibly reveal, but by a Divine Communication.

Or 3. When the Interpretation was quite different from the Dream, nor was without that Interpretation to be underſtood. This was the Caſe of *Pharaoh*, about the *ſeven fat and lean kine*, &c. *Gen.* 41. Of *Nebuchadnezzar*, about his own Transformation and Depoſition, *Dan.* 4. 19. and that of the *Midianitiſh* Soldier, *Judg.* 7. 13, 14.

Where if we grant that the Dreams, as to the matter, might have been the effect of a rolling Imagination, (as *Pharaoh*'s Kine, *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Tree, and the

the Soldier's Cake) yet how the seven Kine should prove a Prediction of seven Years Plenty and Famine; or the felling of the Tree be an Emblem of *Nebuchadnezzar*'s dethronization; or that a Cake of Bread tumbling into the Host, and overturning a Tent, should presignify the Sword, and Success of *Gideon*, and that *into his hand God would deliver the host of Midian*; was utterly unaccountable, if it were not (as *Joseph* said to *Pharaoh*,) that *God himself thereby shewed what he was about to do*, and that it came from him who *is a Revealer of Secrets*, as *Nebuchadnezzar* acknowledged.

Sermon VII.

Lastly, The like may be said of a Revelation by Voice, which, if internal, is the same with a Dream or Vision, as going along with it; and so has the same sort of evidence. If external, it is its own evidence; as was that from Heaven, to give testimony to our Saviour. Or it was by way of Oracle; and then the Authority of the Voices was justified by the numerous Predictions; the design they apparently promoted of encouraging the good, of admonishing and reforming the bad; and in all, of promoting Vertue and true Religion in the world; and to whose veracity future Ages have given Testimony, by suitable Events. Where-

Mat. 3. 17.

as

as those of the Heathens were very suspicious and doubtful, and often detected to be only Forgery and a Confederacy; and disowned at that time (when in vulgar estimation) by the wisest among themselves; and the reputation of which at last as well utterly fell, as the pretence to them did. Sermon VII. vid. Ser. II. p.

So that were the Case to be put upon this issue, and to be decided by the measures before laid down, we may safely venture the whole Cause of Revelation upon it; when there is nothing wanting, that can reasonably be desired, toward the justification of its veracity; and that there is no manner of pretence for applying the same terms of evidence and sincerity to Imagination, as to Inspiration; or to Imposture, (whether Enthusiastical or Diabolical) as is to Revelation.

For when was it known, that Imagination or Nature did ever empower persons to speak all Languages, and to discourse readily at once with the *Parthians*, *Medes*, and *Elamites*, &c. in their several Tongues? When did Imagination or Nature enable persons, without any skill, to cure Diseases, naturally incurable; and such as had no humane Learning, to talk like Philosophers of the sublimest Arguments, and with as much freedom

as

Sermon as they used the Speech of the Foreign Nations they instructed?

VII. Farther, What Imagination, or Nature, or Art could inspirit *Moses* with such a supernatural Power, as to turn his Rod into a Serpent, and to devour those of the Magicians; and by a stroke of it to fetch water out of the Rock, and stop the mighty Current of the Sea?

What Imagination could form such Idea's in the minds of a *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, or inspire a *Joseph* and a *Daniel* to give such an Interpretation of them, as justified it self to be true by a correspondent Event?

When did Imagination give life to a Fly, or do the least Act out of it self? When did that, or Nature, or Imposture, raise the dead, with *Elisha*, call for Fire from Heaven with *Elijah*, or foretel what shall happen a hundred or a thousand years after, or so much as what a Person shall think to morrow? Here we may challenge all the Magicians of a *Pharaoh* and a *Nebuchadnezzar*, all the Men of Art and Science, all the Enthusiasts and Impostors in the World, to talk as the Persons Inspired did talk, to do as they did, and to produce those Testimonies as those upon occasion produced in their own justification, and for the

the confirmation of their Miſſion from God.

Sermon VII.

From all which we ſee what evidence we have for the Truth of our Revelation, by the various ways of its manifeſtation. If we had ſuch Inſpirations, ſuch Viſions of things future and remote, *&c.* what evidence could we deſire more to atteſt and bear witneſs to what we are to believe and receive? And what Abſurdities muſt we be caſt upon, if we would venture to call thoſe matters of Fact in queſtion, which though peculiar to thoſe times, loſe not their evidence and force becauſe they are not in ours, nor have been for ſeveral Ages, nor are, 'tis likely, to be in the Chriſtian Church?

However, there are thoſe manifeſtations of the Divine Preſence and Power, which we are all capable of, and may obtain by Prayer to God; and which ſhall be more beneficial to us, than if we our ſelves could work Miracles, and were the Inſpired Perſons to whom God did thus make known himſelf, as he did *in time paſt to the Prophets*; and thoſe are the Grace and Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, and the doing his Will in virtue of it: Qualifications that will render us more acceptable to him, and make us more capable of his favour, and all the advantages of it in

Sermon VII. this World, and that to come, than if we could divide the Sea with *Moses*, or stop the Sun in its course with *Joshua*, or raise the dead with *Elisha*. For then, though without those miraculous Donations, we may be received with a *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant to us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

HEB. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN which words (as I have ſhewed) there is.

1. A Deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*.

2. The Certainty of ſuch a Revelation, God *ſpake*, 'tis taken for granted.

3. The Order obſerved in it, it was *at ſundry times*.

4. The Perfection and Completion of all; God *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son*.

Sermon VIII.

Under the Third,

(1.) I have conſidered the ſeveral ways by which God did reveal himſelf, as Inſpiration, *&c.*

(2.) Have ſhewed the difference between Divine Inſpirations, and Diabolical Illuſions, and Natural Impreſſions.

(3.) I am now to conſider the ſeveral periods before the Law, under the Law, and under the Goſpel, and the gradual progreſs of Revelation from firſt to laſt, from the lower to the higher degree, and the perpetual reſpect one had to the other.

(4.) I am farther to conſider, why God did thus gradually and *at ſundry times* proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind; and why he did not at the firſt communicate his Will to them as fully and perfectly, as he did in *the laſt days by his Son.*

And then I am to conclude with the laſt General, *viz.*

4. Where I am to ſhew the Perfection of the Goſpel Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation till the end of the World.

I have here a large Field before me; and many difficult Points to treat of; but becauſe this is the Concluding-Lecture of the Year, I ſhall ſum it up, and paſs

pass through the Particulars with as much brevity as the time will allow; and with as much attention as I can; though I must fall short of what the Subject and Nature of the things to be spoken of doth deserve, and might otherwise, be treated of. Sermon VIII.

(3.) I am now come to the Third Branch, and to consider the several Periods, *viz.* the Patriarchal before the Law, the *Mosaical* under the Law, and the Evangelical under the Gospel.

The Patriarchal State, is that which extended from *Adam* to the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, and the giving the Law at Mount *Sinai*, which included in it the space of Two thousand five hundred Years, and upward.

The *Mosaical* or Legal State, was that which extended from the delivery of the Law at *Sinai*, to the preaching of *John the Baptist*, with whom ended the *time past*, and the *last days* began; which included in it the space of One thousand four hundred Years, and upward.

The Evangelical State, is that which began with *John the Baptist*, and is to continue to the World's end.

In the consideration of these three States, we may observe, That there is a great difference between them, and a

Sermon VIII.

gradual ascent from the less perfect to the greater; so that the *Mosaical* is superior to the Patriarchal, and the Evangelical to the *Mosaical*.

When I speak of the Patriarchal, I intend to give it all the advantage, by looking upon it as a State of Revelation, and not a bare State of Nature; for I have before proved, that there was a Revelation from the beginning, and derived down by a constant Pedigree and Succession, more or less. But what it was, we must in great part rather conjecture, than can certainly know; especially as to the *Antediluvian* State. For the Flood having swept away the whole Stock of the ungodly *Cainites*, it was the design of Providence that their *Memorial should perish with them:* And so the Divine Penman contracted that State, and gives us only a Breviat of what passed before the Flood.

We have there the History of the Creation, Fall, and Recovery of Man; and may observe how seasonably Almighty God interposed for his Comfort and Relief, by the promise of *the Seed of the Woman*. We may observe farther, how for the maintaining of his Authority, and the manifestation of his Justice and Holiness, and to imprint on the minds of

Men

Men a dread of offending for the future, and to keep up an expectation of the Son of God's appearing and becoming a Sacrifice in our Nature, God eſtabliſhed from the very firſt a courſe of Sacrifices; by the means of which Atonement Sinners might have a right Notion of Almighty God: when his Juſtice and Mercy were thus intermingled; that they might not be encouraged to preſume on one hand, nor be thrown into deſpair on the other. Sermon VIII.

We may obſerve farther, how God provided for the preſervation of Religion, and eſpecially of Revelation, by the Longævity of the Patriarchs, and a Race of Holy Men, who were Prophets and Teſtifiers of his Will; of whom there was a conſtant Succeſſion; that by a long Converſation between Father and Son, Progenitors and Succeſſors, what was wanting in Records and Memorials, might be ſupplied.

We may obſerve farther, how ineffectual this courſe proved in the Iſſue, how degenerate Mankind grew, ſo inflexible and incorrigible, that to purge out this peſt of Impiety that had infected the whole Race, God took up a reſolution of diſcharging the World of that impious Stock, and to raiſe up a new Seed from

Sermon VIII.

the Righteous *Noah*; and that iſſued in the Flood.

This is the ſhort Hiſtory of the firſt Sixteen hundred fifty ſix years of the World, the Antediluvian State.

The Revelation, ſo far as it is handed down to us in *Moſes*'s Writings, was then obſcure; But a Revelation they had, and Prophets, and thoſe of the higher Form: Inſomuch, that ſome of the *Jews* hold, that *Enoch*, in particular, was endued with a higher degree of Prophecy than *Moſes* and *Elias*.

But whatever it was, the ſum amounted to this, That God was reconciled to Man after his Apoſtacy; that he had eſtabliſhed an Atonement; and that in proceſs of time the Son of God ſhould in our Nature actually appear, and become a Saviour to us, and be a Propitiation for our Sins.

But there is a farther branch of this Patriarchal State, which is the Poſt-Diluvian, after the Deluge.

Here we are in part in the dark as before; for there were no leſs than Three hundred ſixty ſeven years, at the leaſt, paſt (for ſo long it was from the Flood to *Abraham*'s departure out of *Haran*) of which the Inſpired Hiſtorian gives little account. All that we have, is the progeny of the Sons of *Noah*, and their diſperſion,

perſion, and the diviſion of Tongues upon the fooliſh and preſumptuous attempt at *Babel*. Sermon VIII.

The reaſon of this ſeems to be much the ſame as before the Flood; and that was the general depravation of Mankind, of which the ſaid attempt at *Babel* was an Inſtance; and the Call of *Abraham* out of the Land of the *Chaldees* an Evidence.

For the reaſon of that Call of his, was the Idolatry then growing upon the World; the infection of which, it ſeems, the Family of *Sem* had not altogether eſcaped: For this the Anceſtors of *Abraham* are charged with, *Joſh.* 24. 2, 14. And then it was in him that pure Religion began to lift up its head again; and for that reaſon that he might become an eminent Inſtrument for preſerving and promoting it, God revealed himſelf to that Holy Patriarch.

And this is the Third Branch of the Patriarchal Period, which I may call the *Abraamical* State.

The firſt Revelation of this was (as aforeſaid) to *Adam*, which was, that it ſhould be *the Seed of the Woman* (whom the Serpent had ſeduced, and thought to have brought his ends about by). The next opening of this great ſecret of Divine Wiſdom was, that this Seed, or *Meſſias*, ſhould deſcend from the Stock of *Abraham*,

Sermon VIII.

ham, viz. *In thee ſhall all families of the earth be bleſſed*, Gen. 12. 3. which the Apoſtle applies to Chriſt, *Gal.* 3. 16. and to which *Abraham* had a reſpect in the Birth of *Iſaac*, when he gave him that Name, which ſignifies laughter, or rejoycing, *Gen.* 21. 3. 6. Thus our Saviour interprets it in that alluſion, *Your father* Abraham *rejoyced to ſee my day, and was glad*, John 8. 56.

This was the reaſon why *Moſes* did ſo carefully draw down the Pedigree of *Sem*, which terminated in *Abraham*; paſſing ſlightly by the Hiſtory of his Progenitors, and taking up that of this Patriarch, in whom the Holy Seed did more illuſtriouſly appear: And why alſo he ſo punctually ſet down the time when this promiſe to *Abraham* was firſt made, and which as the principal of all, God did ſeveral times repeat to him, and alſo to *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, at the firſt time he is ſaid to have appeared to them.

Gen. 18. 18. 22. 18. Gen. 26. 4. 28. 14.

So that though they had a ſtanding Oracle, and had other Revelations, yet this of the holy Seed was the chief Revelation, and which was upon all ſolemn occaſions renewed.

But though Revelation did eminently conduce to the good of the World, where it was promulged and received, and afford-

ed a much brighter and more certain light than Nature and Reason of it self did; yet even here Revelation made, as it were, a pause, and the Patriarchal State gave way to another which we call, Sermon VIII.

2. The *Mosaical*, which had a manifold advantage of the other.

As

(1.) That Religion here was National, and the People were entire and embodied into one Society; whereas it was otherwise among the Patriarchs, as in the case of *Terah* in *Mesopotamia*; *Melchisedec*, and even *Abraham*, in *Canaan*; and *Job* in *Arabia*; where Religion and the Church was rather Domestical than National.

(2.) The State of the *Jews* was a Theocracy, and the whole of it, whether as to matters Civil or Divine, was established by God's peculiar appointment, and under whose immediate Regiment they were; having his Minister *Moses* their Mediator, *Gal.* 3. 19. and God making them his peculiar and propriety, *Deut.* 4. 33, 34. 14. 2.

(3.) It was a typical State, under which one of greater excellency, and thereafter in process of time to succeed, was adumbrated, I mean, the Evangelical: So that their Rites, and particularly their Sacrifices

Sermon VIII.

fices under that Dispensation, had a peculiar respect to the great Sacrifice, *the Lamb* said to be *slain* (in God's Decree, and in the virtue of it) *from the foundation of the world:* And which those Rites and Sacrifices were intended for the farther ratification, and for the preservation of in their minds.

Revel. 13. 8.

(4.) I may add, there was an improvement made upon this Legal and Typical State, by the Prophetical; which was enobled by the many illustrious Prophecies, more especially concerning the Messiah, as to the time of his Appearance, his Birth, and the Place of it, his Family, Sufferings, Miracles, Resurrection, Ascension, in abundance of circumstances relating thereunto. And when in the declension of the *Jewish* State, Prophecy might be expected should decay with it, it on the contrary increas'd, till on the sudden it wholly ceas'd, when the Revelation of that kind, and for that season, was sufficient: For what could have been more punctual than what was already Revealed?

(5.) After this there was a long interval of above four hundred Years, and a cessation of that Prophecy and extraordinary Revelation which had continued in that Church for the space of above a Thou-

a Thouſand years, from the time of *Moſes* to that of *Zechary* and *Malachi*; at the cloſe of which it had been foretold, that by the coming of the Meſſiah, Prophecy and Revelation ſhould revive, and a more plentiful effuſion of the Holy Spirit ſhould then be, than had been ever before. Now what ſhould be the reaſon of this, but that there might be raiſed in that People the more earneſt deſire after the approaching of that happy Age; and that they might thereby be convinced that their own Inſtitution was not to continue for ever, and that there was a more perfect Diſpenſation which they were to expect, and which was to riſe, as it were, out of the aſhes of the other. Sermon VIII.

And that is

3. The Evangelical State, which is the cloſe and completion of all; in which the Rites of the Law were compleated, the Types anſwered by the Anti-Types, and the Prophecies were fulfilled and interpreted by the Event. So that the New Teſtament is the evidence and proof of the Old; the one declaring what is to come, and the other ſhewing that it is come; both bearing an exact correſpondence to each other.

I proceed to the Fourth Branch of the Third General; where

Sermon VIII.

4. I am to consider why God did thus gradually, and *at sundry times*, proceed in Revealing his Will to Mankind, and why he did not at the first communicate his Will to them as fully and perfectly, as he did *in the last days by his Son?*

So that there are Two Questions to be resolved.

Q. 1. Why God did not communicate his whole Will *at first?*

Q. 2. Why in *these last days?*

A. (1.) As to the former; it may as well be asked, Why God did ever promise? And why he did not actually give at the same time when he promised?

It may again be as well asked, Why there was such a thing as Prophecy, and that the things Propheſied of were not at the same instant accomplished, as they were predicted?

And if that be the question; it may again as well be asked, Why there is such a thing as Succession? Why there are Causes and Effects? And why all things are not Existent at once? And why all Acts are not done together? For Promises and Prophecies imply Succession; and to require there should be no Promises and no Propheſies, is, in effect, to require there should be no Succession.

(2.) A Promise on God's part, implies the

the certainty of the thing in its season, as well as a Prophecy. A Prophecy is certain because of God's infinite Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, to foresee what will be the effect of such Causes, what the events of such Actions, or how he will order and accomplish them: And a Promise implies besides that, his Faithfulness, and that he will infallibly see to the accomplishment of it. And so whatever is Promised or Propheſied of by Almighty God, is as certain in its Causes, and shall be in the Event, as if it was now in being or now done, or that we had it in actual possession. Sermon VIII.

(3.) It is as much, if not more, for the Honour of Almighty God, that there should be a Succession of Beings, Actions, and Events, as if they were all Existent at once; and consequently as much to order such Beings, Actions, and Events in Succession, as it is if they were present.

(4.) As there are in Nature a First and a Second, and so on in progression; and all things appearing in their proper time, order, and course, till by degrees 'tis raised to its highest Perfection: So it is as accountable for God to make known his Will to Mankind, to begin and carry it on, from a lesser to a higher degree, as he sees fit; and upon a strict examination has as much Beauty and Order in it. And

to

Sermon VIII.

to have all Revelation at once, would appear as irregular as for all Mankind to have lived and died all at once.

(5.) Especially is this, where such Revelations are suited to the state of the World, and that the Dispensation of one Age would not suit the Temper and Circumstances of another; of which we have an instance in the *Jews*, who were of that Temper, that a burdensome and Ritual Religion was more fit for them than another more Refined and Spiritual, and whose External and Gorgeous Form was accommodated accordingly to it, *as under age*, Gal. 4. 1. Therefore it is wisely observed by *Theodoret*, συμμέτρα ταῖς ἡλικίαις προσφέρει παιδεύματα ὁ Θεὸς· *That God suited his Instructions to every Age of the World:* And we have good reason to believe this to be so, because there was such a gradual progress in Divine Revelation, as has been already shewn.

Heret. Fab. l. 5. c. 11.

(6.) This is still the more accountable, if we consider that the Obligation of Mankind arises from the Notification of the Divine Will; and that according as the Revelation of it is, so is the Obligation. And therefore those that have no Revelation, are not upon the same strict terms with those that have; nor are those that live under the lower Dispensation, upon the

the same terms with those that have the higher: So the Apostle St. *Peter*, *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but every one that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.* Sermon VIII. Acts 10. 34.

But this in part belongs to the next Question.

Q. 2. From hence we may be able in part to resolve the other branch of the Question, *viz.* Why God did not at the first send his Son to deliver his Will to the World, as he did *in the last days?*

Celsus, a great Adversary to the Christian Religion, from the consideration of Christ's coming so late into the World for the Redemption of Mankind, compares God to *Jupiter* in the Comedy; ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς μάχης ὕπνου διϋπνίσας, *as waking out of a long sleep.* Origen. contr. Celsum l. 6.

But this may as well be objected against any special act of Divine Providence; and were there no other answer to be given, this were sufficient. But as there were many Prophesies concerning this state of things to be accomplished by the coming of the Messiah, so we shall find sufficient reason for the Justification of Divine Providence in laying the accomplishment of this Scene so remote from the first Ages of the World.

Sermon VIII.

For

1. By this means we see what a wonderful Concatenation there is in the Divine Operations, and how in an orderly course all Events succeed according to his determinate Will, and what he has foretold. For there is a History, as it were, of our Saviour before his Appearance; and by the Description and Characters given of him in Scripture for Four thousand Years together, we may be able to prove, that he is the Messiah.

2. It doth not seem that the World was prepared for it before. For if Christ had been Born and Died as soon as *Adam* had Sinned, there would not have been among Mankind the sense of their Condition, and of the need they stood in of a Redeemer, and of the Goodness of God in providing one for them; nor of the Necessity of the Divine Power to rescue them, if they had not had a long experience of the ineffectualness of any other course or means for it.

3. We are to consider, that the benefit of Christ's Death, looked backward as well as forward, and took place from the first publication of the Promise.

For

(1.) Immediately after the Fall, God did promise, That *the seed of the woman* should

should *bruise* the Serpent's head; and this being a Promise made to *Adam*, he himself must consequently have the benefit of it: For what advantage or comfort could it have been to him, that Four thousand Years after there should be a Descendent from him that should become a Saviour to them that were at that time in being, and that should then and afterward believe on him? Sermon VIII.

(2.) We are to consider, that this Promise gave *Adam* as much a title to the benefit of such an atonement, and was to him as stable a ground of comfort, as if it had at the same time been actually executed; or as it could be to any that lived in or after the time that this atonement was actually offered, and the promise in all respects punctually made good.

Hence we read in St. *Paul*, of *the grace that was in Christ Jesus before the world began*, πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, of ancient Times, 2 *Tim.* 1. 9. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour*; and that not in decree only, but in fact; so the same Apostle uses the phrase, *The hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lye, promised,* πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, *before the world began*; 'tis a Promise made in time, and which he there distinguishes Tit. 1. 2, 3.

ſtinguiſhes from the manifeſtation of it. So the *Goſpel was preached before to Abraham*, Gal. 3. 8. and who in the Faith of it, *rejoyced and was glad*, John 8. 56. This is implied *Heb.* 9. 25, 26. *Then muſt he often have ſuffered ſince the foundation of the world*; which implies that all ſin, ſince the foundation of the World, was forgiven with reſpect to that Atonement. So that when there was a promiſe of ſuch a means for our Reconciliation to God, and in the vertue of which the Penitent might plead for pardon, it was equally as advantageous to them that believed *in him that was to come*, from the firſt publication of that Promiſe, as if they had then had a plenary poſſeſſion: So that Chriſt might be well ſaid to be *the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. 13. 8.

Sermon VIII.

4. I may ſay, in all appearance there was not a more proper time for the coming of our Saviour into the World, and for all the Events depending upon it, than that in which he appeared.

And that if we conſider,

(1.) The general expectation of it in conformity to ancient Propheſies. This was notorious among the *Jews*: So *Luke* 19. 11. *They thought the Kingdom*

dom of God ſhould immediately appear; that is, the Kingdom of the Meſſiah. Sermon VIII.

So we find *Simeon* and *Anna*, and others, *waited for the conſolation of Iſrael*, Luke 2. 25, 38. of which number was *Joſeph* of *Arimathea*, Mark 15. 43.

Nay, this or ſomething like it, was got among the *Gentiles*: So *Tacitus*, the *Roman* Hiſtorian, *Many were perſuaded, that it was contained in the ancient Writings of the Prieſts, that at that time it ſhould come to paſs, That the* Eaſt *ſhould prevail, and that they ſhould proceed from* Judæa *who ſhould be Lords of all; which was a Prophecy of* Veſpaſian *and* Titus. Hiſt. l. 5. c. 2. §. 8.

Suetonius another Hiſtorian ſaith, *That it was an old and conſtant Opinion that had prevailed all over the* Eaſt: *This the Event*, ſaith he, *ſhewed to be meant of the* Roman *Emperor; but the* Jews *applying it to themſelves, Rebelled.*

This is agreeable to what is ſaid by *Joſephus*, the *Jewiſh* Hiſtorian, who ſaith, " That which ſtirred up the *Jews*, and " brought final Ruine upon them, was " the Opinion they had from χρησμὸς " ἀμφίβολος, ſome doubtful Propheſy in " the Sacred Writings, that at that very " time there ſhould ariſe from that Coun- Joſeph. de Bell. 7. κεφ. λα.

Sermon VIII.

" try one of themſelves that ſhould Go-
" vern the whole World.

(2.) It was a proper time, becauſe as the World had all along the experience of the inability of all human means for reforming the Manners and Tempers of Men, ſo in that Age more eſpecially, when the Wiſdom of the World was in its height both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

When among the *Jews* they were at that time as averſe to Idolatry, as ever their Anceſtors had been inclined to it, and were in all the punctilio's of the Law as exact and ſcrupulous, as they were ſkilled in the Letter of it; and yet our Saviour found matter enough to condemn and chaſtiſe them for, and their practice was a fit Comment on that of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 8. 3. *What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the fleſh.* So St. *Hierom* Comments upon it, *Now the time was fulfilled, when through evil Cuſtom no Man could keep the Law.*

And if we turn our ſelves to the Heathens, Learning is acknowledged to have flouriſhed in the time of *Auguſtus* beyond any Age, and yet that Age, ſeemed to equal it ſelf in Vice, not only as the Apoſtle deſcribes it, *Rom.* 1. 29. but as it is confirmed by

by their own Hiſtorians: So St. *Auguſtin* deſcribes it, *I am not the firſt that report it*, Sermon VIII. *but their own Authors*; *behold, before the coming of Chriſt, and after the deſtruction of* Carthage, *the manners of their Anceſtors were neglected, not as before by little and little, but like a torrent by a ſtrange precipitation*; *ſo much was the truth corrupted by luxury and avarice.* De civ. Dei l. 2. c. 19.

Now when the World was thus corrupted under the beſt human means, What could be a fitter ſeaſon for our Saviour's Appearance? And therefore the Fathers, as *Origen* and *Tertullian*, triumph'd over the Philoſophers, and deſpis'd their artificial methods of Vertue, as too weak for ſo great and noble an undertaking.

3. It was a fit ſeaſon, as way was made for the propagation of the Goſpel by the diſperſion of the *Jews*, and the ſucceſs of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Arms.

(1.) By the diſperſion of the *Jews*, &c. For as their Law did ſerve to introduce the Goſpel, to which it had a Relation, and of which it was a proof; ſo by their diſperſion upon the Captivity (whence many of them never returned) and by other ſubſequent means, many of the prejudices which other Nations had againſt the *Jewiſh* Religion and Nation, were taken off.

Sermon VIII.

And this was much furthered by the Translation of the Old Testament into *Greek* (which was then the General Language). From whence I am apt to think, that the Opinion mentioned by the above-said *Roman* Historians, did arise. *It was,* saith *Tacitus, in the ancient Writings of the Priests:* And indeed their *ex Judæa profecti qui rerum potirentur, out of* Judæa *should proceed those that should Rule the World,* seems to be but the Latin, of the Greek in *Mic.* 5. 2. ἐκ σοῦ ἐξελεύσεται ὁ ἡγούμενος, *Out of thee shall come a Governour,* as it is in *Matth.* 2. 6. or in the Septuagint, τοῦ εἶναι εἰς ἄρχοντα, *that there should be a Ruler.*

Antiquis Sacerdotum literis.

Ut invalesceret Oriens.

And *Tacitus*'s way of expressing it, *that the* East *should prevail,* is a manifest allusion to the same Translation, which renders the word, *Tsemach, the Branch* (the Name ascribed to our Saviour in the Prophets) by Ἀνατολή, *the East*; so *Jer.* 23. 5. *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto* David *a righteous branch,* or the East; *and a King,* that King, *shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.* Now this Version having been in whole or in part, undertaken for the use, and at the request of *Ptolemy Philadelphus* King of *Egypt*, about Three hundred years

Isa. 4. 2. Zech. 6. 12. ch. 3. 8. Luke 1. 78. Jer. 23. 5. Jer. 33. 15, 16.

years before our Saviour, was in many hands; and so such a material part as those Prophecies could not be overlook'd. And indeed with these Prophecies there may be good account given of those forecited places in the *Roman* Historians, but otherwise they are unintelligible, as appears by their application of them to *Vespasian* and his Son *Titus*, for want of understanding the true intent of them, and the respect they had to the Messiah. Sermon VIII.

(2.) Another means was the success of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Arms; the former of which by *Alexander*, and the latter by *Pompey*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Augustus*, had opened a way into most of the remote parts of the then known world; and by which means, and the civilizing the most barbarous People, there was a freer commerce and access.

It must be confessed, That the Power of God can conquer all difficulties; and which we have an exemplification of in the Gospel, where the *Barbarians* and *Scythians* felt the wonderful power and prevalency of it, as well as the softer and better disposed *Greeks* and *Romans*: *The Word preached with Power overcame all human Nature*, saith *Origen*.

Πᾶς γὰρ σύσιν ἀνθρώπων ὁ μὴ δυνάμεως λαληθεὶς λόγῳ κεκράτηκε. Contr. Cels. l. 2. p. 68.

But God doth in the most extraordinary cases, use sometimes ordinary means; and

Sermon VIII

and especially was this observable, that at that very time of our Saviour's Birth, the Gates of the Temple of *Janus* at *Rome* were shut, which were only in the time of an universal Peace; and which had happened but twice from the foundation of that City, till the Reign of *Augustus* (though twice before this in his Reign, as I remember.)

And this was a very fit season for the *Prince of peace* to appear in, and what in this sence did verify the Angels Anthem at his Birth, *Luke* 2. 14. *On earth peace, good will* amongst, as well as *towards Men.*

And so I am brought to the Evangelical State; where I am,

4th General, To shew the Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation to the end of the world; so it is here, *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*; which implies,

1. The close and conclusion of all, it is *in the last days.*

2. The Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, it is *by his Son.*

1. The close of all, it is *in the last days.*

To which all former Ages had a relation, and in which, being *the last*, they were to be consummated.

Here,

Here, ſetting aſide all ſubdiviſions of time, we may conſider the world, as to Revelation, under a twofold Period, *viz.* the Former and the Latter days. Sermon VIII.

And ſo the Prophets ſpeak of *the laſt days*, as different from what both were before, or what were in their own time. Iſai. 2. 2. Mic. 4. 1.

Now *in theſe laſt days*, there is a certain part of time circumſcribed, which in reaſon is to have ſuch characters belonging to it as it may be known by them when it was to commence, without which the *Epocha* was not to be determined. So that the firſt thing to be conſidered is, When theſe *laſt days* began, and what are the Characters by which that time is to be known?

And they are ſuch as theſe,

(1.) The appearance of a Perſon, that from his ſpirit and temper, the Scripture calls *Elijah*, *Mal.* 3, 1. *and* 4. 5. who was to be the Forerunner of the *Meſſiah*, and to *prepare the way* for his reception.

(2.) The Reſtauration of the Spirit of Prophecy, which ceaſed among the *Jews* from the time of *Zechary* and *Malachi*, (as has been before obſerved) and was to be reſtored in *the laſt days*. *Joel.* 2. 28. *Acts* 2. 16.

(3.) Many Impoſtors which were to appear, and who did not appear till a-

about

Sermon VIII.

bout the time of the *laſt days*, according to our computation of them; ſo 1 *John* 2. 18. *It is the laſt time; and as ye have heard that Antichriſt ſhall come, even now are there many Antichriſts; whereby we know that it is the laſt time.* *Matth.* 24. 5, 24.

(4.) *The laſt days* were, when the Meſſiah himſelf did appear, *called the fulneſs of time*, Gal. 4. 4. and ſo it is expreſs in the Text, *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.* To which we may add the Converſion of the *Gentiles*, *Iſa.* 2. 2. *and* 61. 1, *&c.*

From whence it is evident, that there is ſufficient ground for theſe two Periods, *viz.* the Former and the Latter days; and that the Latter began with our Saviour, and continue to the end of the world, whenſoever that ſhall happen: And therefore as it is called *the fulneſs of time*, becauſe it is the completion and conſummation of all; ſo it is called *the cloſe of the Ages*, (we tranſlate it *the end of the world*) or *the laſt days*, becauſe there were none to come after the expiration of this; and comprehends in it (as aforeſaid) all the ſpace of time from Chriſt's firſt, to his ſecond Appearance. *Heb.* 9. 26. *Acts* 1. 11.

Συντέλεια τῶν αἰώνων. Heb. 9. 26.

And

And ſo there can be no other time, and ſo no other Revelation; for as long as the *laſt days* hold, ſo long the preſent Revelation is to continue; and then there can no more be any other Revelation, than there can be *laſt days* beyond the laſt. Sermon VIII.

And this will be confirmed by the next Branch.

2. The Perfection of the Goſpel Revelation, included in that phraſe, God in theſe laſt days hath ſpoken to us *by his Son.*

'Tis but reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſince there has been a gradual Progreſſion in Revelation from time to time, and from a lower to a higher degree (as has been already proved) that the honour of all in the cloſe ſhould be reſerved for the Son of God; to whom the Prophets were Harbingers, and the Angels themſelves Miniſters. This is the foundation of the Apoſtle's Argument, and the drift of his Diſcourſe, in this Chapter, beginning with the Text, *God who at ſundry times —— hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things —— being made ſo much better than the Angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they: for unto which of the Angels*

Sermon VIII.

Angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, &c?

Now as the Son is the last that appears, so beyond his there cannot be supposed to be any other Revelation, but that the Revelation must be like to himself, Perfect and Compleat; and so there can be no other Gospel; and whosoever pretends to another, falls under the *Anathema* of the Apostle, *Gal.* 1. 8, 9. *If any preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* For here it is;

1. That we find the great Prophecies fulfilled in the Messiah; whose Characters, though many, all center in our Saviour, as to Person, Time, Place, Qualifications, and Event.

2. In Him are all the Types, fulfilled, and all the *good things* accomplished, which the Rites of the Law were the *shadow of*, Heb. 10. 1.

3. By him is the most Perfect Revelation of the Will of God made known to the world, of all that God has promis'd and we may expect.

4. By him have we the most Perfect Rule, the Highest Motives, most Noble Principles, and Glorious Rewards, and all things that conduce to the Perfection and Happiness of Mankind.

So

Sermon VIII.

So that to any one that reads and compares thoſe ſeveral Diſpenſations before ſpoken of together, as he muſt acknowledge there is this Gradation, ſo that the Chriſtian Inſtitution is for the Matter and the Evidence of it ſuperior to all; and it will be as evident, that it can be exceeded by none.

For it is as perfect as can or need to be; for we cannot aſcend higher in our Notions and Conceptions of things than we are there taught. We cannot exceed its Rules in our Practice, nor be defective in any neceſſary part of our Duty, if we adviſe with and obſerve it: Nor can we deſire more excellent Encouragements and Rewards than are therein propoſed, ſuch as are Eternal. So that though the *Law* of Nature, or of Moſes *made nothing perfect*, *yet the bringing in of a better hope* by the Goſpel did, *Heb.* 7. 19.

And now we have nothing farther to expect, no more another Revelation than another Meſſiah; no more than another God to reward us, and another Heaven to reward us with.

And with this I am to conclude, having paſſed, by God's Aſſiſtance, through the ſeveral Heads I at firſt propoſed in the beginning of this Lecture. The Argument is the moſt Noble Subject in Religion

Sermon VIII.

ligion; what has been wanting in the Management of it, is to be aſcribed to the Weakneſs and Imperfection of the Inſtrument: But if there has been any thing offer'd, which may tend to the farther Proof and Confirmation, the Illuſtration and Improvement of it; it is to be aſcribed to God, who is *the giver of every good gift.*

From him muſt we wait for the Bleſſing and Succeſs, and *To Him be all Honour and Glory*, &c.

SER-

SERMON I.

The Second Year.

GAL. I. 8, 9.

Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

THE People of the *Jews* having been all along trained up under the Law of *Moses*, and by virtue of it possess'd of peculiar Advantages beyond any

other Nation, were apt to think it as la-
Sermon sting in its Obligation, as Divine in its
I. Original; and that it was no more in the intention of Almighty God to have it abolished, than it could be disproved to have come immediately from him. This made them slow and backward to receive the Gospel, by which their ancient Constitution would be disannulled; and after they had believed, it made them inclinable to hearken to such Sophisters, as pretended to compound the Controversy, and to join *Moses* and Christ, the Law and the Gospel together, so as to be both alike necessary to Salvation: Which is in effect to set up another Gospel than what the Apostle had taught, and they had received from him; and therefore he expresses his resentment and indignation against it with the highest aggravations, Verses 6, 7, 8. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel; Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ: But though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,* &c.

In discoursing upon which words: I shall consider,

1. What

1. What is underſtood by the *Goſpel*, which the Apoſtle had preached, and they had received. Sermon I.

2. What by *another Goſpel*, againſt which and the Preachers of it, the Apoſtle ſo ſharply inveighs, and pronounces an *Anathema*.

3. I ſhall ſhew that the Goſpel is the only Revelation from God; and that there is not another, nor is any other to be expected.

1. The Goſpel is here oppoſed to the Law of *Moſes*, which there were ſome in the Churches of *Galatia*, as well as in other places, that would maintain to be neceſſary to Salvation, if not alone, yet in conjunction with the Goſpel (as aforeſaid). Theſe two indeed were ſo far conſiſtent, that the Law was a prefiguration, a Shadow and Type of the Goſpel: But being thus a Shadow and a Type of it, That in reaſon and from the nature of the thing, was to give way, when the Subſtance came on, and the Types were fulfilled. And therefore though the Law was eſtabliſhed at the firſt by Divine Authority, yet in courſe was it to ceaſe in its obligation, when the reaſon of it ceaſed: And conſequently, to plead for its Authority and Obligation, whether in conjunction with, or oppoſition to the Acts 15.

Sermon I.

Gospel, was to say that the substance of those Shadows, the completion of those Types, was not accomplished, that Jesus was not the *Messiah*, nor the Gospel true. In this sense these two that in a state of subordination were consistent, by this means were made to be opposites to each other.

So the Apostle, *Chap.* 5. 2. *If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.* V. 4.—*Ye are fallen from grace*; ye at the same time deny what you seem to confess; it is a perverting the Gospel of Christ, and establishing another Gospel.

But this is only a kind of a negative account of the Gospel; therefore we are to proceed farther in the consideration of it; and then we are to understand by the Gospel, the Christian Religion, and more especially that part of it which is
Acts 11. 26. called Christian, and for which the Professors of it are called Christians, as distinguished from all Religions besides. All mankind are not more of the same common Nature, than they generally agree in the common Principles of Nature: And that which is natural to all, cannot be a Character by which one man is distinguished from another. But when a Man or Institution is called Christian, it is for somewhat peculiar, and distinct from that which is common to all. And

there-

therefore though the Law of Nature be a branch of the Christian Religion, as it was of the *Mosaical*, and is also in it self of a never-failing obligation; yet there is a supervenient Institution, and somewhat besides that, which denominates us to be Christians, without the belief and practice of which, we can no more be entitled to that Character, than that can be called a Natural Religion which excludes, or is contradictory to the Laws of Nature, and the just Reason of Mankind. Sermon I.

And of the number of such Principles, which are necessary to the Constitution of Christianity, and consequently to the Character of a Christian, and are the Articles of his Faith, are the Incarnation and Nativity, the Death and Resurrection and Glorification of our Saviour.

1. His Nativity and Incarnation. So 1 *John* 4. 2, 3. *He that denieth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.*

2. His Death, as he died for Mankind, and was a Sacrifice for Sin. So St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 15. 1, 2, 3. *I declare unto you the Gospel, which also ye have heard, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* So that to believe in Jesus as the

Sermon I.

Meſſiah, and as a Suffering *Meſſiah*, was according to the Scriptures, and by the belief of which we are to be ſaved.

3. His Reſurrection, and what was conſequent upon it, his Glorification, the reward of his Humiliation. In which ſtate he is conſtituted our Mediator. From the connexion betwixt which two, his Death and Interceſſion it is, that we ſeldom read in Scripture of the one without the other.

Phil. 2. 8, 9. 1 Tim. 2. 5, 6. Hebr. 9. 14, 15, 23. 1 John 2. 1, 2.

Theſe are conſtituent and eſſential Articles of Chriſtianity; and if theſe, or any of theſe are omitted, as it is not Chriſtianity which is left, and it would be another Goſpel; ſo it is what the Apoſtle's Anathema will be applicable to.

From whence we may be able to anſwer the next Queſtion.

2. What is to be underſtood by *another Goſpel?*

When the Apoſtle ſpeaks here of *another Goſpel*, he thereby means ſomewhat that is added to it, and with it made neceſſary to Salvation, as it was when the obſervation of the Law of *Moſes* was maintained to be as obligatory to the Chriſtians, as ever it had been to the *Jews*.

From which Caſe, by a parity of Reaſon we may argue, 1. That whatever alters the Terms and Conditions of the Goſpel, and

and makes that neceſſary to Salvation which the Goſpel has not made neceſſary; or that unneceſſary which the Goſpel has made neceſſary, is ſuch a perverting it as makes it another Goſpel: For that is to ſet up that as a Divine Revelation, which hath not the Divine Authority to confirm it. Sermon I.

For it is God alone that can appoint the Terms of Salvation; and ſo, what no Man, or Society of Men, has any Authority in, to frame, alter or revoke. The neceſſary Articles of Faith, and Inſtances of our Duty, muſt have a Divine Eſtabliſhment; and ſo what we muſt learn either from the invariable Principles and Dictates of Human Nature, or pure Revelation.

2. That is *another Goſpel* which pretends to a Revelation from God for its Authority, when it is of Human invention or imagination: And that whether for the matter of it, it be true, or falſe. It may for the matter of it be true, and yet not be a Revelation, but proceed only from Men; and then to place that to the account of Revelation, though it be for the matter of it true, is a notorious Falſhood and Impoſture. But if for the matter of it, it be falſe, it's a double Falſhood; as it pretends to a Revelation,

Sermon I.

which is not Revelation, and also calls in the Veracity of God to give testimony to a Falshood.

Supposing then that the immaculate Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, Transubstantiation and Purgatory are true, yet to plead a Revelation for them, as it is pleaded in the Church of *Rome* *, if there were no such Revelation, doth fix such an indelible blot upon that pretended Infallible Church, as all the Water of *Tiber* cannot cleanse. But if it should prove false (as those things certainly are) then it is to add a sort of Blasphemy to the Imposture, as it makes the God of Truth to justify a Falshood.

* Breviar. Rom. Octob. 8. Bellarm. *de Purg. l.* 1. *c.* 11. *de Euchar. l.* 3. *c.* 8.

3. That is another Gospel, which doth establish another Rule, or adds to, or detracts from that which is established, *Rev.* 22. 18.

Now the Scripture is the Rule of Faith and Practice; and then to alter the Rule, by adding to it, or taking from it, is to alter the Gospel (which that contains the Revelation of) as they do in the Church of *Rome*, who not only add the *Apocrypha* to the Canon; but, as the *Pharisees* of old, give the same Authority to unwritten Tradition, as to the Scripture; and require it to be received *with the like pious regard*, according to the Council of *Trent*.

Lastly,

Lastly, To alter, to add to, or diminish from the Fundamental Articles or Principles of it, is to make it another Gospel; as it is to deny Christ to be a Mediator, or to appoint other Mediators than him, such as Angels and Saints. Sermon I.

By so doing, the Gospel is rendred as imperfect, and the Scripture as an imperfect Revelation of it. But this there is no occasion for, as I shall now shew by proving, That

3. The Gospel, or Revelation, made known to the World by Jesus Christ, is always to continue the same; and no new, or other Revelation is to be expected.

This was the Sum of the last Lecture, and is to be the remaining Subject of this.

There have been such, in several Ages of the Church, both anciently, and of late, that have pretended to new Revelations; and that there was a more perfect Dispensation to ensue, than what was contained in the Gospel. Of this Opinion were the *Montanists* of old; and of this mind seems to have been *Abbas Joachim*, who flourished about the Year 1200. And what was also expresly maintained in the *Evangelium Æternum*, or *Everlasting Gospel*, chiefly taken out of the Works of *Joachim*, and published by the *Mendicant* Fryars about 1254. Wherein it was affirmed, * That the

Matth. Par. *Hist. Ann. Dom.* 1255.

the Doctrine of that Abbot excelled that Sermon of Christ: * That the Gospel of Christ was to give way to another Gospel, called the Everlasting Gospel; or Gospel of the Holy Ghost.

I.

Eymericus, *Direct. Inquisit.* Gul. *de S.* Amore *de peric. noviss. temp.* Prateolus *de Hær. l. 4. V. Dr.* Stillingfleet, *Fanaticism of the* Roman *Church.*

And this was a Doctrine spread far and near, among the *Beguardi* in *Germany*, the *Alumbrados* in *Spain*, and the *Fratricelli* in *Italy*, &c. The Spawn of which continued for a long season in several parts, and in some till *Anno Dom.* 1560. who all agreed, that their Doctrine came from God by as immediate Inspiration as ever the Gospel of Christ did.

I deny not, but that there may be some particular Revelation or Inspiration, with respect to some especial Case: But as it may arise, for ought we know, from imagination, so if it be not attended with great caution and circumspection, may end in the Whims and Frenzies of a *Brigit*, a *Catharina*, or a Mother *Juliana*, and what not? Nay, it may proceed to the disannulling the Gospel it self, and to the preferring their own Inspirations (as they will have it) above it.

But supposing it to be true, that there may be now some particular Inspirations from God in such special cases; yet it is to be supposed that they are agreeable to the Gospel Revelation; but if once they contradict

contradict it, it can be no more a true Revelation, than the Gospel can be false; and yet such must be a Revelation that will make the Gospel to cease in its obligation, and to be of no more Authority to Mankind, than the Law of *Moses*. Sermon I.

When the obligation arises not from the nature of the thing, but from positive Institution, it is in the power of the Lawgiver to bind or loose, to establish or evacuate a Law as he thinks fit. And thus it was in the Law of *Moses*, which consisted of things typical, that had a special reference to that People, and the place of their Habitation, *&c.* Such were the distribution of the Tribes, the preservation of their Genealogies, their three great Festivals, their *Sabbatical* Year, and Year of *Jubilee*, &c. Of this temporary nature also were the Ceremonies of the Law, which either had a relation to the Customs of the Nations conterminous to them; or to a more perfect State that was in process of time to succeed it. The Laws relating to which could not be supposed to be of any force, when They were excluded that Land, and the Tribes were lost and confounded; no more than the Laws relating to the Wilderness and the Tabernacle, could oblige them when they

Sermon I.

they were ſetled in *Canaan*, and that they had a Temple erected there.

Deut. 29. 29.

And therefore the phraſe *for ever*, when annexed to that Conſtitution, muſt have a laxer interpretation accordingly allowed, which was, That it ſhould continue to oblige, (as it follows often where that Phraſe is uſed) *throughout their generations*; that is, whilſt they were that People, ſo embodied, and ſo ſituated.

Exod. 12. 17. Lev. 23. 14.

And had the Goſpel conſiſted of ſuch things that were thus mutable in themſelves, or thus peculiar to any People, Time, or Place; there might be reaſon to admit it to be temporary; and to be evacuated when time ſhould ſerve, as the Law was; But there is nothing either in the nature of the thing, nor is there any notification of the Divine Will concerning any time ſet for its expiration; but rather the contrary; and ſo there is not the ſame reaſon for a new Diſpenſation after the Evangelical, as there was for the Evangelical after the *Moſaical*.

I grant that it is as poſſible in it ſelf for God to reveal himſelf at ſome time hereafter, as it was for him to have revealed himſelf heretofore: And he that revealed himſelf under the Law, and at the firſt Inſtitution of the Goſpel, may, if he ſo pleaſe, after the ſame manner, reveal himſelf

himself at any time, or times: But he that will assert the futurity of this, must have more to prove it than a possibility. It is certain God has revealed himself, and that the Gospel was by Revelation from him: But there is not the like certainty for a Revelation after the Gospel, or in after-times of the Gospel, as there is, that the Gospel it self was of Divine Revelation. Sermon I.

It is certain that the Gospel has been the only Revelation for above 1600 years past, and that we have had no other Revelation than that contained in the Scripture: And therefore whatever Pretences any Persons or Age made to it, were apparently Mistakes and Impostures; for that Dispensation of the Holy Ghost, which each Sect fancied to be in their Age, or near to it, is yet to come, if ever it is to be. *V. Spondani Annal. Eccles. Ann. Dom. 1204. de Almarico.*

But to give some farther light and force to this Argument, I shall shew,

1. That there is no proof of any other Revelation, than the Gospel of our Saviour, and now recorded and preserved in the Holy Scripture.

2. That there is no need of any farther Revelation.

3. That the Scripture shuts up all Revelation with it self, so that no other Revelation is to be expected beyond it.

1. There is no proof of any other Revelation,

velation, than what is contained in the Sermon Scripture.

I. If any one will contend, that there either is, or ſhall be ſuch a Revelation, he muſt have ſome Revelation to prove it: And that muſt either be an antecedent Revelation, ſuch as Scripture is taken to be; or it muſt be ſome perſonal Revelation, made to himſelf, or to ſome other credible Perſon or Perſons.

But where is the Revelation of this Revelation?

If it be to be found in Scripture, where is the Prediction of ſuch a State, That the Goſpel ſhall be ſuperannuated, and another of greater perfection ſhall grow out of it?

Under the Law there was a plain ſignification of another Revelation to be in the time of the *Meſſiah*; and of a more perfect ſtate of things to enſue. But where are the Proofs as plain under the Goſpel for a New Revelation, as there were for that of the Goſpel under the Law? Or where is it ſaid of that, as it is of the Heb. 8. 13. Law, that it *decayeth*, or is antiquated, *and waxeth old*, and ſo *is ready to*, or ſhall at laſt *vaniſh away*? Our Apoſtle here ſaith on the contrary, *If we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that which we*

we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed.

Sermon I.

If it be a perſonal Revelation, then we may reaſonably demand, Where is the Evidence for ſuch a Revelation?

All Revelation muſt have a ſufficient Evidence; and if it be a true Revelation, and what obliges us to receive it as ſuch, it will be able to produce its Evidence.

And a New Revelation muſt ſuppoſe a better ſort of Evidence than the former, or at leaſt equal to it. There muſt be the like wonderful Works; the Blind muſt as miraculouſly be made to ſee, and the Lame to walk, and the Diſeaſed to be whole, and the Dead to riſe. Nay, Chriſt himſelf muſt again deſcend from Heaven, and dye, and riſe, and aſcend; or elſe the Miracles will fall ſhort of what it is in competition with.

Nay, it muſt proceed farther, and its Evidence muſt not only be equal, but ſuperior alſo to that which it is to ſupplant. It was not only fit that *Moſes*'s Rod ſhould be turn'd into a Serpent, but when the Magicians pretended to do the ſame, to ſhew his Power to be greater than theirs, his Serpentine Rod ſwallowed up theirs.

It was not enough that he brought forth Frogs, when *Jannes* and *Jambres* produced the like; but that he ſhould do

Exod. 7. 12. 2 Tim. 3. 8.

Sermon I.

what they could not, and so what would oblige them to acknowledge it to be *the Finger of God.*

Exod. 8. 18, 19.

And thus our Saviour being to advance a new Scheme of things, did not only shew he was the Person described, and prophesied of; but also by his numerous Miracles, and many of them such as never any, neither *Moses*, nor any Prophetical Person, ever did work.

John 15. 24.

If then there be no such Evidence for such a new Revelation, (where there is a pretence to it) we may conclude it to be *another Gospel*, a suppositious Revelation, and what is to have no credence given to it, no regard paid to it. It's Anathema.

2. There is no need of any farther Revelation. Revelation has somewhat in it of a Miracle; it is a way extraordinary; and as we cannot suppose God will work Miracles, and break through the standing Laws of Nature, when there is no occasion for it, nor necessity to require it: So we cannot suppose he will communicate himself by a way of Revelation, and immediate Inspiration, and much less break down an Established Order of his own appointment, when there is as much reason for the Continuance of it, as for the Institution; and that it answers all the Ends

Ends for which a new Conſtitution can be framed, or a new Revelation made. Sermon I.

The Apoſtle argues, *If the firſt Covenant had been faultleſs, there ſhould no place have been ſought for the ſecond:* And if *there be a place* for a Third, there muſt be ſome fault or imperfection chargeable upon the Second. But that I ſhall ſhew it to be freed from; and that the Second Covenant or Goſpel-Revelation is ſo perfect, that there is no need of another. For, Heb. 8. 7.

(1.) There can be no more noble and uſeful Subject for a Revelation, than that of the Goſpel, which is concerning God's Reconciliation to Mankind, and their Redemption by the Death of his Son.

And where this is plainly revealed, there is no place for a Second, nor any need of a new Revelation.

(2.) If we conſider the Goſpel-Revelation as a Covenant, conſiſting of Promiſes and Conditions; there cannot be more excellent and beneficial than thoſe, nor more neceſſary than theſe.

For what can be propoſed of greater advantage unto Mankind, than what the Goſpel offers to thoſe that believe and obey it? It is no leſs than the favour of God, the bleſſing and protection of his Providence, the aſſiſtance of his Spirit,

and in the close of all, Everlasting Life, a translation out of this mortal, uncomfortable, and uncertain State, to a State of unchangeable Happiness; where Body and Soul shall again be united, *When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* An Encouragement that is the highest Cordial that can work upon Humane Nature, and will (if any Consideration can) qualify the Troubles of this present Life, and set a Man above the fears of an exclusion out of it.

Sermon I.

1 Cor. 15. 53.

And when this is promised, there can nothing be offer'd beyond it; nor is there any need to find out others after this is propos'd.

And such as the Promises are, such are the Conditions required of us, which are as unchangeable as the Reward: Those indeed are unchangeable from the Divine Declaration, and God's faithfulness; but these are unchangeable from the nature of the things, as well as the Divine Command. So that there is no room for another Revelation, unless we can change the nature of things, and make *evil good, and good evil; and put darkness for light, and light for darkness*; unless we will dissolve all Order, and confound all Relations, and set the Creature loose from

all obligations of Love, and Gratitude, and Service to the Creator. Terms surely uncapable of abatement or alteration. For who can suppose Mankind should be left at liberty, whether they would love God, or neglect him; whether obey, or violate his Laws; whether they would be vertuous or vicious; and whether they would believe in Jesus, and own him to be their Saviour; or, with the *Jews*, reject him, and *not have him to reign over them?* Alter the Promises and Conditions, and there is *another Gospel*, and another Revelation; but till they are altered, or alterable, there needs no New Revelation. Sermon I.

All the abatements or relaxations that can be allowed, are inserted into the body of this Revelation; where there is a twofold allowance; an allowance of remission for whatever sins are past, and truly repented of; and an allowance for Humane Infirmities under the strictest obligations to our Duty. And lower than these the Gospel doth not, nor for the reason before given, can descend; since then it would countenance Impenitence, and establish Iniquity by a Law; and then indeed it had been an imperfect, a defective, a faulty Covenant, and there would have been a place for a New.

Sermon I.

(3.) The extent of this Law, or New Covenant, is such as none can exceed it; for it is as much fitted for the whole Race of Mankind, as any could be for any particular Nation. The Law of *Moses* was a Law to the *Jews*, suited to their Temper and Circumstances in its original Frame and Constitution; and so what other Nations, as Nations, could not come within the benefit of; nor could particular Persons, otherwise than as they became Proselytes, and made themselves subject to it by the same way of initiation in Circumcision. And it is of the nature of all Humane Laws (though the general Lines running through them are one and the same) that they are fitted for the immediate use and service of that People, whose Laws they are; and which therefore vary infinitely, and alter as Circumstances alter, and as Reasons of State require.

But now the Gospel-Dispensation comprehends in it all Nations, and they are all to that as if they were but one People. It was our Saviour's Commission to his Apostles after his Resurrection, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* And such as the Commission was, such were the Rules and Precepts they were to give and publish, which were

Matth. 28. 19. Mark 16. 15.

were of universal concernment and obligation; and neither confined by Persons nor Places, by Times nor Circumstances, but what all Persons, in all Places, Times and Circumstances, are equally obliged to observe; and which are of that nature, and have such a tendency to the good welfare and happiness of Mankind, whether alone, or in Society, whether as particular Persons, or Families, or Nations; that if exactly observed, purity, and peace, and love would every where abound, and the Earth be a kind of Paradise again. Sermon I.

And therefore, if there be any Narrowness of Mind, and feuds among Mankind, if Vice and Wickedness overflow the World, it is not for want of a Law every way perfect to bind and restrain them; or that there needs *another Gospel* to mend them; but for the reason given by St. *James*,—*from their lusts that war in their members.* James 4. 1.

(4.) If we consider the Evidence given to the Gospel-Revelation, we shall find there needs no other evidence to be given to that Revelation; nor that there needs any other Revelation for want of Evidence in this. Our Saviour's Life was a Life of Miracles as well as Innocence; and wherever he went, the Divine Power

Sermon I.

went along with him; for *in him dwelt the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily.* And which he exerted wherever he came, and as occaſion ſerved, to the confuſion, if not the conviction or converſion of his Adverſaries; and all which at laſt concluded in his own Reſurrection from the dead, his Aſcenſion into Heaven, and the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, which began on *Pentecoſt*, but like a Torrent ran on through the Apoſtolical Age, and bore down all manner of competition. And what then can any Revelation pretend to beyond it? Or where can there be any that can be ſuppos'd to produce the like Evidence for its veracity? (as I have juſt before obſerv'd).

Coloſ. 2. 9.

Laſtly, How can we have a Goſpel that can pretend to vye with that which the Son of God came into the World to reveal, who was the laſt that was to come from Heaven; and when our *Faith* is that which was once *delivered to the Saints. Once for all*; and ſo there is no more another Faith or Revelation to be expected after that, than another Mediator after Him, who was *once offered to bear the ſins of many.*

Jude 3.

Heb. 9. 28.

This leads to the Third Branch.

3. The Scripture ſhuts up all with this Revelation; and becauſe we have now no

Revela-

Revelation but that Written Revelation, we cannot suppose any Revelation beyond it, and much less derogatory to it; or that shall direct us to any other way by which we are to be saved, than that we *have already received*, and is therein recorded. Sermon I.

I have before observed, that the time from our Blessed Saviour's appearance, and the publication of the Gospel by him (to his second coming) is called the *last days* in Scripture, and consequently has none to succeed it. So the Apostle, *As it is appointed unto Men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without a sin*-offering, *unto Salvation.* That is, as there is no alteration in the state from Death unto Judgment, but as Men dye, so they will appear to be at Judgment: So there is no alteration to be between Christ's first appearing, when he offer'd himself, and his Second, when he *shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into Heaven.* *Serm.* VIII. *of the last Year.* Heb. 9. 27, 28. Acts 2. 11.

If therefore there is to be any alteraon as to this Revelation, it is not to be before, but must be after our Saviour's second appearance. But of that we have nothing to say.

Sermon I.

Thus far as I have consider'd the Argument, there may be very few supposed to be concerned; that is, such as set up another Revelation in opposition to the Gospel-Revelation; or that maintain the Revelation of the Gospel to be only temporary, and that it shall have its season in which it is to expire, and be succeeded by another. And it may seem to be scarcely worth the while to have spent so much time upon it, with respect to such wild Enthusiasts as have been, and still are in the World.

But however, what has been hitherto said, may be of farther use with reference to another Case, just mentioned before, P. and that is the Case of personal and occasional Revelation; which may be conceived only to serve to a more spiritual Manifestation of the Revelation already received, and so be no more derogatory to that Revelation, than occasional or personal Revelation heretofore in the *Mosaical* State was to the Body of that Law, which was of immediate and Divine Revelation, and of universal Obligation to that People.

I would not altogether deny this; because I know not how far some Persons may in some cases be enlightned by a Spirit of Prophecy; nor what particular

Directions they may receive in an extraordinary way in some special Cases with respect to themselves, to others, and the Church of God; which may be like a special Providence to some particular Persons. But now as a Man must govern himself by the general Rules of Divine Providence, and not by particular; and because he has sometimes met with Deliverances, and Supplies, and Directions beyond all his own foresight and reasoning, must not forsake his own reasoning and care, and wholly rely upon the extraordinary: So it is to be here; a Person may perhaps have some occasional Revelation, some Divine Inspiration, at some special Season, or in some special Case; but if he forsakes the Ordinary to depend upon the Extraordinary, and expects Revelation in every Case, because he has had it in some particulars, he will as much be subject to error, and err no less dangerously, than if he wholly relied upon Divine Providence, and forsook all other means whatsoever. Sermon I.

And truly this is a way much liable to be abused, and to mislead Persons, and is very suspicious and dangerous.

1. It is a Case liable to imposture and abuse, forasmuch as those that are under the influence of such a conception,

Sermon I.

on, are not always, if at all, capable of making a certain judgment of it. For it is all transacted within, and the Imagination may be so much influenced by the Body, and by an agitation of the Humours and Animal Spirits, from an Enthusiastical and even a devout Temper, by prepossessions and foreconceived Principles, and even by the Circumstances of Life, that it may be wholly natural; as natural as Dreams, or the Deliriums of a Fever, which proceed from the ebullition of Blood, and such like ordinary Causes.

2. Persons have been imposed upon, and taken the effect of Imagination for Inspiration and Divine Illumination. I am far from condemning all the Instances of this kind of Hypocrisy, and of a design to deceive, like *Maria Visitationis* in *Portugal*. I will rather think more charitably, That very often they have thought themselves thus moved and acted by the Spirit of God; and yet notwithstanding all their Pretences, and the Opinion others have had of them, it has been afterwards evident, that it has been far from being a Divine Infusion and Illumination. What shall we think of *Teresa*, whose Life is full of her Visions and Revelations; and of whom

Jesus Maria. Joseph Teresia. *composed by* Paul *of St.* Ubald. 1654.

whom we are told by one of that Way, That besides many other extatical Sights in the Kingdom of Heaven, she often had *the sight and company of the Holy Trinity, of each Person in particular, that they spoke to her, and she to them; and used to ask, and did obtain particular favours of each.* ——*That God shew'd her how all Creatures are contained in his Divine Essence, as in a Chrystal Glass, and that she saw therein the Thoughts, Words, and Deeds of all Men. This* (and truly she had reason to think so) she said, *was one of the greatest favours to her.*

Sermon I.

Part 3. *p.* 65, 71, 86.

p. 72.

Now if we would but alter the place, and for the Nunnery conceive her to be in an Hospital, we should take it to be, what that Author in a transport sometimes calls it, a *Phrenzy*.

And what a Legend of Dreams would the World be furnished with, if the Visions and Revelations of this kind were bundled up together, as the Miracles of reputed Saints have sometimes been?

Legenda aurea. Bolandus, &c.

3. They are very much to be suspected of Imposture.

(1.) And that because we read so little of this way in Scripture, even in the Apostolical

Sermon I.

Apostolical Times, and nothing to encourage us in the expectation of it afterwards: We read nothing there of the *Union of the Soul to the Divine Essence*, of *its being absorpt and drowned over head and ears, and ingulphed in the depth of Divinity, so that it became one and the same with God*, by a *true Deification*. We read there sparingly of some Extasies; as one of St. *Peter*, and one or two of St. *Paul*; but with how much reserve and modesty doth the Holy Apostle speak, when he comes to *Visions and Revelations of the Lord*, when he *heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a Man to utter?*

Ubald. p. 14, 16, 41.

Acts 10. 10. 2 Cor. 12. 1, &c.

But what can be greater, if these of *Teresa* be true? And where might we more expect to be entertained with the Relations of such *Rapts*, as in the Gospel? So that when they are there so unusual, and here so frequent, that even Societies are embodied and formed from it, we have reason to suspect.

(2.) It's much to be suspected, when that which is the proper means of judging, and of distinguishing Imagination from Revelation, is laid aside, which is Reason; and when all is resolved into the Person's own Testimony and Assurance.

We

We are required in all Caſes to *ſearch*, and to *try*, which doth ſuppoſe the free exerciſe of our Reaſon; and when this is rejected, 'tis a ſign there is no truth in the thing pretended. Sermon I.

(3.) It is ſuſpicious, when they exalt their own private Revelations to the ſame Authority with the Revelations of Holy Writ; and ſeek to juſtify the one by the other.

(4.) When they eſteem the way of Religion, as deſcrib'd in Scripture, to be mean, in compariſon of this that they are in, and prefer this way of Contemplation and Inſpiration above the plain Precepts of Chriſtianity: When it is a condeſcenſion in them to joyn in External Worſhip. Thus it is given by Father *Ubald*, as an inſtance of the attainment of one among them to ſome degree of this rapturous State, that when the hour of Prayer was ſpent, *he could hardly be perſuaded that it was ſo, not knowing what Prayer he was in.* P. 57. n. 4.

And the famous *Quietiſt*, *Molinos*, reports of *Gregory Lopez*, " That having " for the ſpace of three Years continued " that Ejaculation, *Thy Will be done in* " *Time, and in Eternity*; repeating it as " often as he breathed; God diſcovered Spiritual Guide, l. 1. c. 17. n. 135.

" to

Sermon I.

" to him that infinite Treasure of the " pure and continued Act of Faith and " Love; and that during the thirty six " Years he lived after, he always con- " tinued that pure Act of Love, with- " out ever uttering the least Petition, " Ejaculation, or any thing that was " sensible.

So that all is by this means resolved into a spiritual and senseless Frame and Course, a certain stilness and quietness, as *Molinos* expresseth it, *When the Soul doth not know whether it be alive or dead, lost or gained, agrees or resists; this*, saith he, *is the true resigned Life.* Where there is no External Service for the Mind to be concerned in, no External Object to be attended to.

Ibid. l. 3. c. 7. n. 63.

A State of Perfection that is above what the Gospel doth describe; and is *another Gospel* than what we have in Scripture received; and which there needs an uncontroulable Evidence for; the want of which increaseth the suspicion. For,

(5.) There is no Evidence for all this beyond their own simple affirmation. And who is there without good Evidence that can believe that those Rapturous Ladies, (such as *Santa Teresa*, and *Don-*

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na Marina d'Escobar) did in *Molinos*'s Phrase, *hear and talk with God hand to hand*; when he reads the interlocutory matters that are said to have passed between them; as for Example, *Whenever* (saith *Teresa*) *the Lord commanded me any thing, if my Confessor told me another; I turned to the Lord, and told him, that I must obey my Confessor. This*, saith that grave Man upon it, *is sound and true Doctrine, which secures Souls*; or rather confounds and destroys them. This puts me in mind of what the same Author elsewhere observes, *The desire of Revelations uses to be a great hindrance to the interiour Soul, especially to Women; and there is not an ordinary Dream, but they will christen it with the name of a Vision.*

Sermon I.

Ibid. Preface, n. 17.

L. 2. c. 2. & c. 9. n. 71.

Ibid. l. 2. c. 6. n. 46.

The World, especially one part of it, has been much imposed upon, when credulous this way. The Pretence aboveſaid, of *Maria Visitationis*, is an Instance beyond all exception, who imposed upon her Confessor (no less a Man than *Lewis Granada*) the Inquisition, and even on the Pope himself: And yet notwithstanding she pretended to somewhat more than internal for her Converse with our Saviour, *&c.* was

V. Lud. à Param) de Orig. Inquisit. & Bp. Wor. Fanat. of the Church of Rome; and Dr. Geddis of the Ecclesiastical State of Ethiopia. Appendix.

was detected at last of notorious Im-
Sermon posture.

I. But most of the Visionaries (we are speaking of) pretended not to so much. And therefore where there is no external Evidence attempted by them, nor that we have the Gift of Intuition to see into their inward and Self-evidence, we have no reason to think otherwise of such Illuminations, and Introversions, and Interlocutions, than at best the effects of an heated Imagination. But of this before.

P. And so much the rather are we to be careful in these matters, and not to be too easy of belief,

4. Because it may be very dangerous in the consequence of it. For if instead of a Star, it should prove an *Ignis fatuus*, whither may not Persons be led under the delusion of it? For what will not be concluded to be lawful, nay, a Duty, which Revelation shall warrant? And where will this end, if it once be credited, and that we commit our selves implicitly and blindly to such an uncertain Guide, so that in the issue such a Spirit of Revelation, as it is not promised by God, and therefore not reasonable

sonable to be expected; so it is not to be desired. Sermon I.

I shall conclude this with a Saying of one conversant in that way, *You must not think them holiest, that have Consolations, Visions, and Revelations; for many are great Saints that never had any of them; and others that had Visions and Gusts are not therefore Saints; for true Sanctity doth consist in solid vertue, and true conformity of our will to the will of God in all things*, &c. Ubald. *ibid.* part 3. c. 6. n. 11.

I freely acknowledge that there will be a great alteration in the present State of the Church, before the close of the whole, and before an end shall be put to Christ's Mediatory Kingdom upon Earth; When *the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the Mountain; and all Nations shall flow unto it.* Isa. 2. 2, &c. When *the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb*, &c. and that the *Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea*; that there shall be but one Church over all the World, by the conversion of the *Jews*, and the coming in of the fulness of the *Gentiles*; and that by the coming down of the New *Jerusalem* from Heaven, it shall be in a State of perfect Peace; and there shall Ch. 11. 6, &c. Revel. 21. 1, &c.

Sermon II.

be in that fence *a new Heaven and a new Earth*. But that is a State in reserve; and there will need no evidence for that which will be self-evident.

2 Pet. 3. 13, 14.

In the mean time, if *we, according to his promise, look for a new Heaven, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness*, let us, according to the Apostle's Advice, *be diligent, that we be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless*. Amen.

SER-

SERMON II.

JOHN V. 39.

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.

AFTER that our Saviour had cured the Impotent Man at the Pool *Bethesda*, *Ver.* 9. the *Jews* sought to Slay him, because he had Healed him on the Sabbath-day, *Ver.* 16. And so much the more were they bent upon this, as in Vindication of himself he had *said also that God was his* [ἴδιον] own proper *Father*, *making himself equal with God*, Ver. 18.

Our Saviour therefore, in the following part of this Chapter, largely insists upon the Explication and Proof of what he had asserted, and appeals to a Threefold Testimony for his Justification, *viz.*

 (1.) That

Sermon II.

(1.) That of *John* Baptiſt, who bore Witneſs of him, and to whom *for a ſeaſon*, they gave Credit, *Ver.* 32, 33, 34, 35. (2.) His own Works, *Ver.* 36. *they*, ſaith he, *bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* (3.) The Scriptures, *Ver.* 46. *Had ye believed* Moſes, *ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.* And in the Text; *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think*, &c.

The Words may be either an Appeal to the *Jews*, and ſo are to be read by way of Affirmation and Conceſſion, *ye do ſearch the Scriptures*, as it is in the Margin: Or they may be read Imperatively and by way of Exhortation, as it is in our Verſion, *Search* ye *the Scriptures.*

If we admit the former, then they are a Reproof to the *Jews*, that profeſſed to be very converſant in thoſe Sacred Books, ſo that not a Word, Syllable or Tittle ſhould eſcape their notice (as it's ſaid in After-times of the *Maſorites*), and yet ſo little heeded what was the main Subject of them, that they obſerved not how the Characters belonging to the Meſſias pointed plainly to him.

But I conceive the Words are to be underſtood as an Exhortation, as the way of our Saviour's arguing doth ſhew, which is from point to point, from *John* Baptiſt,

to

to his own Works; and from his Works to the Scriptures: And so St. *Basil* and St. *Athanasius* understand them. Sermon II.

If the Words contain a Duty, then they are an Appeal of our Saviour to the highest Authority, that is, Divine Revelation, and what even the *Jews* themselves admitted for such. So that should they reject the Testimony of *John* Baptist, whom they did at one time believe to be a Prophet: Or should they be so perverse (as they sometimes were) as to impute our Saviour's miraculous Works to *Beelzebub*; yet the Scriptures were a proof not to be gain-said. For they themselves thought and *judged* (as the word δοκεῖτε signifies) that *Eternal Life* was therein Revealed, and by the direction whereof it was to be obtained; and yet even those did *testify of him.* Having brought the controversy thus far, it would in reason be at an end: Thither therefore he remits them, to their Authority he Appeals, these he requires them to *Search*; and if they Searched, and Searched sincerely and impartially, they would find Him (whom they now traduced, and whose Life they sought) to be the Messias there described. So he concludes his Discourse, *There is one that accuseth you, even* Moses, *in whom ye trust. For had*

[Bas. l. 2. Bapt. c. 4. Athan. Tom. 2. p. 295. Par. 1627.]

Sermon II.

ye believed Moſes and his Writings, *ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me*, *Verſ.* 45, 46. or as it is in the Text, *They teſtify of me.*

From the Words I obſerve;

1. That notwithſtanding there is a Revelation from God, and owned to come from him; yet there may be Diſputes about Points contained in that Revelation. It was ſo here, the *Jews* as well as our Saviour believed the Old Teſtament to be a Divine Revelation, and to contain all things neceſſary to Everlaſting Life; and yet there was a Diſpute about an Article of no leſs Importance, than whether our Saviour was the Meſſias therein propheſied of, and whom they hoped for Salvation by.

2. There is a Direction what to do in this Caſe, and that is to repair to the Rule; *Search the Scriptures*, impartially Examine them, and compare what is therein Revealed with what our Saviour affirmed concerning himſelf.

3. There is the final Deciſion of the Caſe, and that is by the Scriptures. You grant, ſaith he, they contain all things neceſſary to *Eternal Life*, *and they are they which teſtify of me.* Thereby he is willing to abide, and thereby they ought to be concluded.

4. Here

4. Here is a farther Direction how to *Search*, implied in the Verſes following, *Verſ.* 41, &c. and that is, with Humility and Diligence; with Impartiality and Sincerity, without Prejudice and Preposſeſſions. Sermon II.

The Words, we ſee, contain a plain Reſolution of a Caſe of great Importance, and that is, what is to be done in Matters of Doubt or Controverſy, and how Perſons ſhould proceed to obtain due ſatisfaction.

And here the firſt thing to be agreed upon, is, By what ſhall we be tried, what is the Rule which is to determine us, and which we muſt abide by?

The next thing is, Who ſhall be the Judge?

The Third is, What are the Qualifications of ſuch as are to judge?

To the Firſt, our Saviour anſwers, We muſt go to the *Scriptures*; for if it be a matter of Conſequence, and concerns *Eternal Life*, there to be ſure it is contained, and there it is to be found.

As to the Second, He ſaith, The Perſons concerned are to *Search*; thoſe that doubt, queſtion or deny, are carefully to examine.

As to the Third, He ſaith, They muſt lay aſide all other Intereſts, and *Search* with all Humility, as thoſe that love God,

Sermon II. and *seek after the honour that cometh from him only*, Ver. 44.

So that by this resolution of the Case we have gained two or three considerable Points, towards the resolving all Doubts, and ending all Controversies in the Christian Church: And they are,

1. That the Scriptures are the only Rule, by which we are to judge and determine concerning points of Faith, and things necessary to Salvation.

2. That it appertains to all Persons to have recourse to, and to judge by this Rule concerning matters of that nature, and which are of that Importance.

3. A Direction how to Search, and that is with Modesty and Humility, with Sincerity and Impartiality.

1st. The Scriptures are the only Rule by which we are to judge and determine concerning Articles of Faith, and matters necessary to Salvation.

'Tis on all hands granted, that there must be some Authority which Faith is to be resolved into: For Faith is no other than an assent to some Proposition or Propositions upon Authority: And according as the Authority is, such is our Faith, Humane or Divine.

So that Divine Faith must have Divine Authority, and Divine Authority is no other

other than Divine Revelation, delivered *at ſundry times and in divers manners*, Written or Unwrirten. Sermon II.

And where there is no verbal Revelation by Perſons divinely Inſpired, the Written Word is the only Authority that Faith can be reſolved into; which our Saviour here appeals to, and propounds as a means ſufficient, and in their Circumſtances, as the only means for ending the Diſpute.

The Queſtion here in Debate was (as I obſerved before), Whether Jeſus was the Meſſias propheſied of in the Old Teſtament? This the *Jews* denied, and our Saviour affirms, appealing for proof of it to *John* Baptiſt, to his own Works, and to the Scriptures, and there he leaves it. For this was the old and true way of deciding matters of that nature; *To the Law and to the Teſtimony*; *if they ſpeak not according to this word, there is no light in them.* Iſa. 8. 20.

Indeed in After-ages a party of the *Jews* roſe up, that *taught for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*; that did exalt their Traditions to an equal Authority with the Divine Law, and made it equally a fault to tranſgreſs them; as our Saviour charges it upon them (of which more anon); But our Saviour ſhews the invalidity of this, and directs them to the Fountain of all Revealed Truth, the Holy Scriptures Matth. 15. 2, 3, 9. Mark 7. 8, &c.

Sermon II.

Scriptures then extant, as a Rule sufficient to guide them, and of Authority sufficient to determine them.

And this was the course he at other times took: As doth the young Ruler put a serious Case to him; *Good Master, What shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life?* Our Saviour answers, *Thou knowest the Commandments.*

Mark 10. 17.

Do the Sadduces, that denied a Future State and a Resurrection to it, contend with our Saviour about it? He argues with them from the Scriptures, *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures. —As touching the Resurrection of the Dead, have ye not read,* &c.

Matth. 22. 29, 31.

Would he instruct the Disciples in the great Articles of Faith? He doth it from those Sacred Oracles: *Ought not Christ to have suffer'd?* &c. And *beginning at* Moses *and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Luke 24. 25, 26, 27.

In like manner did the Apostles proceed to convince the *Jews* of their Incredulity: So St. *Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, That the Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus is the Christ.* So *Apollos shewed by the Scriptures, That Jesus was the Christ.*

Acts 17. 2, 3.

Acts 18. 28.

To

To this they always remitted them, as to a Rule certain and sufficient, and without which nothing was to be received as an Article of Faith. Sermon II.

To a Rule certain, called therefore by St. *Peter* 2. 1, 19. *A more sure word of Prophecy*, and which he prefers before a Voice from Heaven.

And a Rule sufficient, that is, (as St. *Paul* saith) *able to make wise unto Salvation*, and *thoroughly to furnish* even *the Man of God*, the Teacher, *unto all good Works*. 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

And when these things were spoken at that time more immediately of the *Jewish* Canon of the Old Testament, they may equally as well be applied to the New; which is not only as much the *Scripture* (as St. *Peter* calls it, 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. as I have before proved) but also by the addition of it, renders the Old much more intelligible and compleat. *Serm.* VI.

Now there can be no imaginable reason assigned, why the Scripture which was then sufficient in all Points necessary to Salvation, and for resolving of Faith, should now be insufficient after the Revelation made by Christ: That is, that we should be more at a loss with the more clear, full, and perfect Revelation, than they were under the less perfect; that

Sermon II.

what in the *laſt days* God deliver'd and reveal'd *by his Son*, ſhould be leſs ſufficient to direct us, than what he *ſpoke at ſundry times, and in divers manners, in times paſt*, to the Jews, *by the Prophets*.

And eſpecially conſidering, that there was a time when their Circumſtances were much the ſame with ours, which was in the long interval of 400 or 450 Years between the finiſhing of the *Jewiſh* Canon in the Prophecy of *Malachi*, (with whom Revelation ceaſed) and the appearance of *John* Baptiſt. In which time they were left, as we are, wholly to the written Word of God for their Direction, and the ſole Authority they were to rely upon.

Since then in the Chriſtian Church there is no more need of any Traditionary or Unwritten Word, than the *Jews* had at that time at leaſt, under the Law; and no more proof to be made of it now than there was then; it follows, that the Scripture is the only Rule, in excluſion to all others; and what is not contained therein by poſitive Proof, nor by evident Conſequence to be deduced from it, can no more be of Divine Authority and Obligation to Chriſtians, than unwritten Traditions were then to the *Jews*.

This

This is the true Resolution of Faith; and if our Saviour in a point of such Importance, as his being the Messiah, put the Case upon this issue, we have good reason to think that it is still the true Method of reasoning among Christians, and of resolving any Point of Faith and Doctrine necessary to Salvation. Sermon II.

And therefore supposing we would find out the truth of any Doctrine thus necessary and Fundamental, we must come hither for direction and resolution; and if it has no Foundation in Scripture, we are to reject it. For it is a Rule in the Law, *Quod Instrumentum non dicit, nec nos dicere debemus*; or as it is usually said, Where that has not a Tongue to speak, we are not to have an Ear to hear. 'Tis then a *Doctrine of Men*, and may be *a Tradition of the Elders*, but is no Fundamental Article of the Christian Faith.

But grant this; yet it has been before yielded, that Doubts and Disputes may arise in the Church, about the sense of this written Rule; and therefore who shall be the Arbiter to judge and determine? or how shall the Doubter be resolved? or how shall he be sure of the Sense and meaning of that which is disputed?

Our

Sermon II.

Our Saviour here directs what is to be done; *Search the Scriptures*, examine and prove all by this Rule. He doth not direct them to any ſpeaking infallible Guide, nor to any Church, nor Perſons into whom their Faith is to be reſolv'd, but puts them themſelves upon the trial of it. Whence it follows,

2. That every Man is to judge for himſelf.

Certainly if ever there were a neceſſity of an infallible Judge to determine points of Controverſy to Mens hands, it had been in the long Interval before ſpoken of, between the Ceſſation of Prophecy, and the Appearance of our Saviour; when there were divers Sects riſen up among the *Jews*, continually contending one with another, and oftentimes about matters of very great Importance.

Of which I ſhall give a few Inſtances:

(1.) There was at that time a notable Controverſy about the Church, which was the true. This was the Caſe between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*; as 'tis ſtated by the Woman of *Samaria*, John 4. 20. *Our Fathers*, ſaith ſhe to our Saviour, *Worſhipped in this Mountain* Gerizim, *and ye ſay, that in* Jeruſalem *is the place where Men ought to worſhip:* That is, ye ſay, Yours is the true Church,

Church, and we say ours is that true Church: And each of these were so violently addicted to their own way, that *the Jews would have no dealing with the Samaritans*, nor so much as *ask drink* of them in their necessity, *Ver.* 9. Sermon II.

And on the other side, the *Samaritans* would not so much as receive the *Jews* into their Houses, *Luke* 9. 53.

Nay, so high did the Contest grow between them, that it ingaged them in the fiercest Quarrels, even to Assaults and Assassinations, wherever they were, out of *Canaan* as well as in it; as their Historian reports. *Joseph. Antiq. l.* 12. *c.* 1. *&* 3.

And though that *Samaritan* Temple was afterward utterly destroyed by *Hyrcanus*, about 130 Years before our Saviour; yet the Prejudices and Animosities continued, till both fell under the common and final Destruction by the *Romans*. *L.* 13. *c.* 6. *&* 18. *l.* 20. *c.* 5.

(2.) Another point in Controversy was about a Future State, and the Resurrection to it. This was disputed between the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees*: For *the* Sadducees *held that there was no Resurrection, nor Angel, nor* separate *Spirit*, existing out of a Body (for that the *Jews* called a Spirit); but the *Pharisees confessed both*. Acts 23. 8. Mat. 22. 23. Luke 24. 37, 39. *V. Lightfoot Tal. Exercit. on Acts.*

(3.) Another

Sermon II.

(3.) Another material Controverſy that then divided the Church, was, What was the Rule of Faith? For the *Sadducees* (as ſome Learned Men have thought) would admit the Law of *Moſes* only to be of that Authority; and what was not therein contained, was among them accounted of no validity; and therefore they denied a Future State, becauſe (as they pretended) there was no proof of it from that Law. But the *Phariſees*, whatever reſpect they might give to the Law above the other Books of Scripture, yet allowed both to be of the ſame Authority; and ſo what was contained in any of them, to be the Object of Faith.

Again; The *Sadducees* were for Scripture alone, without any Traditions; but the *Phariſees* ſet their Traditions in the ſame Rank with the Scriptures, and would have both of the ſame Obligation (as has been aforeſaid) and if either was to give way to the other, the Scripture was rather to give way to Tradition, than Tradition to the Scripture. About which matters there were often great Diſputes and Differences between theſe Two powerful Factions, as the Hiſtorian relates; ſo that however they were mutually concerned in the Government, yet the Flame broke out upon every

Joſeph. Antiq. l. 13. c. 18.

every occasion, and which St. *Paul* made his advantage of, who when he perceived that the one part of the Council were *Pharisees* and the other *Sadducees*, cried out, *I am a Pharisee, and the Son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* By these means they filled the whole Nation with Bandyings and Feuds; the great Men generally siding with the *Sadducees*, and the People with the *Pharisees*, as the same Author saith. Sermon II. Acts 23. 6.

(4.) Another point in Controversy among them was about the Messias. This was a Character much pretended to by several about the time of our Saviour; and was the chief Subject in dispute between Him and the Ruling-part of the *Jews*.

Points surely these were of great Importance, *viz.* Which is the True Church? What is the Rule of Faith? Whether there be a Future Life? And whether Jesus be the Messias? And Points these were that the whole Nation of the *Jews* was divided about: So that in all appearance there was scarcely ever a greater occasion for a determining Power to put this Case to an issue.

Now if there had been any such Infallible Authority, any such Concluding

Sermon II.

Power Visible and Known; as it was then, if ever, necessary; so no doubt, there would have been Appeals to it in these Disputes among themselves, and with our Saviour: And in reason it may be thought our Saviour would readily have appeal'd to it, because the Judge being Infallible, could never have determined and given it against Him.

But we read of no such Appeals in Scripture; but on the contrary, our Saviour puts them upon another way of Enquiry; not to *Search* after a Living and Infallible Judge, by whom they were to be finally concluded; but to *Search the Scriptures*, as the Infallible Rule by which they were to be determined. And accordingly the Apostles advised their Auditors to the same course; that they should thereby *prove all things*, and *hold fast* what upon trial they found to be *good* and true. That they should *not believe every Spirit*, every Pretender to Revelation and Infallibility, but should *try the Spirits whether they were of God*; and there was good reason it seems for it, because, saith the Apostle, *many false Prophets are gone out into the World*, 1 *John* 4. 1. that pleaded Inspiration and a Divine Mission and Authority for what they taught; as is manifest from the Epistles

1 Thess. 5. 21.

Epiſtles of the Apoſtles: And yet the Apoſtles (who themſelves had the Spirit of Infallibility and Immediate Revelation) referr'd the *Jews* to the Written Word as the Rule, and to their own Reaſon and Conſcience as the Judge. Sermon II. 2 Cor. 11. 13. Tit. 1. 10. 2 John 7.

If ever any might have required an implicit Faith, and an abſolute and a blind Obedience to their judgment, it was Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and yet we find that they would have all Try and Examine, Weigh and Conſider. It being an innate Privilege of Mankind, not to be led blindfold; but to be governed by their Reaſon, a privilege that true Religion doth evermore preſerve, and what every Man is obliged to defend, ſince every Man muſt *give an account of himſelf to God:* And therefore the *Bereans* are commended by St. *Paul*, as Εὐγενέστεροι more generous and free-ſpirited; *Who Searched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things were* true, which that Apoſtle taught, and compared one with another, his Doctrine with that Holy Standard; and finding them to accord, *they received the word with all readineſs of mind.* So manifeſt is it, that in the Apoſtolical times every Man was to judge for himſelf, and to uſe the ſame reaſon in Rom. 14. 12. Acts 17. 11, &c.

Religion, which he used in the Common Affairs of Life.

Sermon II.

All that those inspired Writers desired, was, That Men would *Search*, and search Impartially, and then they did not question but as they would be like the *Bereans* in Temper, so they would be alike prevailed with in the conclusion, and *receive* the truth with the like promptitude and *readiness of mind*; toward the finding out of which, Searching and Honesty go a great way.

And whereas it might have been thought, however, that the times would come when the Apostles should leave the World, and immediate Inspiration should cease with them, and so Men would be left to their own Fallible Judgment in the Interpretation of the Rule: Yet there is no other provision made by our Saviour and the Apostles for preventing any such Inconvenience (though they foresaw and foretold there would be Deceivers and Impostors); but all Future Ages were left in the very same Circumstances with the *Jews* in that Period of 450 years before spoken of.

Mat. 24. 24. 2 Tim. 4. 3. 2 Pet. 2. 1.

The Divine Writers supposing that there was in the Scriptures such a plain and full Revelation of all things necessa-

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ry to be known in order to Salvation, and there would be so much Reason and Sense in Mankind (where so great an Interest as their Salvation was concerned) that with ordinary and common Helps, such as Prayer and Consideration, and Advice and appointed Teachers are, that they would be able to find out the Truth, or as much of it as was necessary to their Salvation, if they came to it with sincere and well disposed minds: And that God would never suffer such to want Ability, Opportunities and Means for it; or be wanting in Mercy to them, in forgiving and passing by such defects as were unavoidable to them in their Circumstances. But that belongs to the next Head; and that is, Sermon II.

3. The Direction, what to do in this Case, which is to Search, that is, with Diligence and Impartiality.

Supposing this, that every Man is to judge for himself, then persons will judge differently, and there will be Eternal and Endless Disputes. To this our Saviour fits an Answer, not only in the Direction given in the Text, but also in the subsequent part of his Discourse, which amounts to thus much; that we are to search with Diligence and Impartiality.

Sermon II.

The former is implied in the Word ἐραυνᾶτε *Search*, and which is very requisite in matters of such Importance as those were which our Saviour is here Discoursing upon, and that is no less than his being the Messias, the Son of God. A Subject that from the quality of it, and the various passages in Scripture relating to it, requir'd due Consideration. For though the Scriptures are so plain in most necessary points, that in the Prophet's Isa. 35. 8. Phrase, *the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein*, and what are as soon understood as they are read: Yet there are even some of those that in the nature of the thing require a strict and careful attendance: Of which kind are such as contain the Characters of the Messiah; and therefore lye not so open to a superficial Eye, but that they may be misunderstood; and he that would then know and understand the force of the Argument referring to it, must *Search*. Our Saviour doth not therefore say only, That the Scriptures *Testify* of him, but requires them to *Search*, if they would be satisfied in it. For though proofs of this nature often are like Mines, that lie deep, yet upon Searching they are to be found: And if so, then our Ignorance is not to be imputed to their Obscurity, but

to our own Neligence, that we take not that courſe which is proper thereunto, and may very juſtly be requir'd. Sermon II.

But there is a farther Qualification requiſite, and that is Sincerity and Impartiality.

Our Saviour here reſolves the Infidelity of the *Jews* into Obſtinacy and Inſincerity. They had another Intereſt to mind, a Reputation to maintain, Ver. 40. *Ye will not come to me.* Ver. 42. *Ye have not the love of God in you.* Ver. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour which cometh from God only?*

Theſe and the like *Vicious Inclinations* hinder from *Searching*, or from finding the truth if they *Search*, or from receiving it though they find it. Perſons thus diſpoſed will then *handle the word of God deceitfully*, and like artificial Orators put what Colour they pleaſe upon it. They will pervert and *wreſt*, diſtort and writhe the Text, till they force it to ſerve the Cauſe they eſpouſe, and are reſolved beforehand to maintain. 2 Cor. 2. 17. ch. 4. 2. Eph. 4. 14. 2 Pet. 3. 16.

And ſo it would be, if there were an Infallible Judge, and ſo it was when there were Inſpired Perſons in the Church, when our Saviour himſelf was in the

Chair, and the Apoſtles were *helpers* of their Faith.

Sermon II.

So that there is no Fence in the World againſt Perverſeneſs and Obſtinacy, againſt Pride and Self-conceit, againſt Intereſt and Self-ſeeking.

Theſe things indeed will make the Scripture difficult, and Truth unintelligible, though ne'er ſo plain in it ſelf, or never ſo evidently proved: When in the Phraſe of Scripture, *Their heart is waxed groſs, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have cloſed their eyes, leſt at any time they ſhould ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their heart.* For then it is with ſuch as with a ſickly Stomach, that will nauſeate the moſt wholſome and delightful Diet: In which Caſe it is not the fault of the Diet, but of the Stomach, which wants an Appetite, or of the Palate that wants the ſavour, which is the occaſion of the diſorder; and for remedy of which, the Body is to be cured, and the Stomach to be reſtored to its natural Tone and Temper; and then the ſame Diet will be nouriſhing and grateful as before.

Matth. 13. 15.

So it is in the Caſe before us, where it is not the Underſtanding but the Will that is in the fault, or ſome pre-occupations

tions and Siniſter Inclinations, that do cloud the Mind and keep it from judging, or diſpoſe it by ſuch fatal Biaſſes to judge amiſs. Sermon II.

But now if the contrary Temper prevail, that Men *lay aſide all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs*, all Prejudices and Intereſts, *and receive with meekneſs the ingrafted word:* If they are candid and ingenuous, free and impartial, and come with an hearty deſire to know the truth, and with a ſtedfaſt reſolution to be guided by it (whether it be for or againſt their worldly Intereſt), and to do according to what they know, they ſhall not finally and fundamentally miſtake; according to our Saviour's reſolution of this Caſe, *Joh.* 7. 17. *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or*, ſaith he, *whether I ſpeak of my ſelf.* So again, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my Diſciplines indeed, and ye ſhall know the truth, John* 8. 31, 32. For God will not leave an honeſt Mind without ſuch means as ſhall be ſufficient for the underſtanding of all things neceſſary to Salvation. He that ſent a *Philip* to an *Eunuch*, and an Angel to *Cornelius*, and called to a *Saul* out of Heaven, will preſent ſuch occaſions, give ſuch aſſiſtance, or direct to ſuch Inſtructors, Jam. 1. 21. Acts 8. 26. ch. 10. 5. ch. 9. 4.

Sermon II.

Instructors, that shall, as *Aquila* to *Apollos*, *expound unto* them *the way of God more perfectly.*

Act. 18. 26.

And if we put the Case, that a Person sincerely disposed to know and receive the Truth should fall into error (for Man is a fallible Creature), yet the Error shall not be Damnable, but what may be as consistent with his being a Christian and Orthodox, as Infirmities are with a good Man, and Sincerity. For as in the present State, which is a State of Infirmity, there is no arriving to such an established temper of Virtue and Goodness, but that *Elijah*, and *Paul*, and *Barnabas*, and the best of Men were *subject to like passions* with others: So neither is it possible by the utmost Diligence, and the most laborious Searching, to find out the Truth, so as never to mistake nor embrace Error for it (for that would as much be above the state of Nature thus to be infallible, as impeccable); nor is it necessary, when a Person may be saved with all tolerable Errors, as with natural and unavoidable Infirmities. And this then neither the Providence of God, nor the Promise of our Saviour are concerned to prevent: For these are like Diseases that belong to the quality of the State we are in; and are no more to be prevented,

Jam. 5. 17. Acts 14. 15.

prevented, than our Nature and our State are to be alter'd, and of imperfect to be made perfect. Sermon II.

But so far both the Promise, and the Providence of God, in confirmation of that promise, are concerned, that a Person of a truly sincere Mind, continuing such, shall no more fall into a damnable error without his own fault and choice, than be guilty of a damnable Sin; for that would be to leave him in a damnable condition, who upon the terms of the Gospel otherwise most certainly should be saved. For no Sin under that Dispensation damns, but what is wilful; according to that known Saying of St. *Austin*, *Nihil ardet in Inferno nisi propria voluntas.*

Or however, if he should fall into such an error, as is against a fundamental Article, and for the quality of it, is damnable: Yet it shall not be damnable to him. It is a Case special, and what, though it falls not within the ordinary Rules of the Gospel shall however taste of the Mercy of it.

The Apostle speaks of *Damnable Heresies*; and we have those Truths which we call Fundamental, and both are rightly so termed; because those Truths are so essential to the Christian Faith, that it 2 Pet. 2. 1.

cannot

Sermon II.

cannot be the Christian Faith without them: And those Heresies are so destructive to the Christian Faith, that it cannot be the Christian Faith with them.

But yet because it is an error of invincible Ignorance, and what proceeds from a mere defect in the Understanding, and not in the Will, we may charitably conceive, that it being not that sort of *Heresy*, which is a *Work of the Flesh*, God will not impute it to such to their Condemnation; and that their Piety towards God, and Charity towards Men, shall through Christ's Merits and Intercession do more to save them, than their involuntary mistakes, how great soever, shall do to damn them: Since God requires *according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Gal. 5. 19, 20.

2 Cor. 8. 12.

But because for the most part the Error is rather in the Will than in the Understanding, or at least is then the more pernicious of the two: therefore as we should enquire after the truth, and be careful to receive it when it is proposed; so it is as necessary that we should *receive the truth in the love of it*, and then it will have an influence upon us proportionable to the Consequence and Importance of it.

2 Thess. 2. 10.

And

And as they are the beſt, moſt uſeful and neceſſary Principles that moſt of all tend to make Men Good and Religious; ſo that is the beſt Teſtimony of our being in the right, and that our Principles are true, that we are thereby made more holy and pure, more juſt and charitable. I look upon this as an undoubted Evidence of the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, that it moſt of all conduces to ſuch an excellent End; and it will appear that he beſt underſtands it, that makes it the Rule of his Life as well as of his Faith; which if he doth, as he cannot likely miſtake in his enquiry after Truth, ſo it's certain in the Iſſue he ſhall not miſcarry. For then he that comes thus prepared to *Search the Scriptures*, will both find what they *teſtify* unto, and obtain that *Eternal Life*, which is therein revealed and promiſed. Sermon II.

There it is then that the matters of greateſt Conſequence are to be found, and all Points relating to them are reſolved, ſuch as do moſt nearly concern our eternal Happineſs.

And if Scriptures do require our utmoſt Diligence and Care to find out their meaning, yet in the iſſue when found out, it will reward all our pains, though it be as great as the Affairs of this preſent

Sermon II.

ſent Life are not managed nor accomplished without.

I do acknowledge the Church of *Rome* hath put this matter into a far more compendious courſe, if it were as true as it is ſhort, by an Infalliblile Judge, who by an *Ipſe dixit*, without giving any reaſon, ſtamps upon all he ſaith, an uncontrollable Authority; but that muſt be, if a Perſon is ſo near the Papal Chair, as to have the Infallible Ear to apply himſelf to, and immediately receives the dictates from the Infallible Oracle. For if he be remote from him, and receives all by Written Decrees, or the Oral Tradition of others, it iſſues then into a kind of Fallible Rule, and fails to be the Sentence of the Infallible Judge. For Words and Writings if they once fall into Fallible Hands, according to them, ceaſe to be Infallible, and are as much ſubject to difficulties, and about the ſenſe of which have often happen'd as endleſs Contentions and Miſunderſtandings, as ever they can pretend have happened to an Infallible Rule. Therefore they are no ſafer, nor leſs ſubject to err by the having an Infallible Judge, than we by an Infallible Rule: Nay, ſo much the worſe is it with them, as we cannot ſuppoſe that an Infallible Judge (if we go to their Fountain-

tain-head) can more clearly interpret the Divine Rule, than God himself could and did direct and dictate to those who wrote it. So that at last they are left with all their Pretences to Infallibility, in a condition worse than those that have an infallible Rule for their Director; and that with their own Diligence and Searching, and the blessing of God concurring therewith, like *Apollos*, become *mighty in the Scriptures*, *Act.* 18. 24: For to such is that spoken which never was said to any Infallible Judge, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.* Sermon II.

SER-

SERMON III.

ACTS XVII. 11, 12.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and Searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.

THESE words are the Character of the *Bereans*, to whom St. *Paul* and *Silas* preached the Gospel, being drove from *Thessalonica*, a neighbouring City of *Macedonia*, by the Fury of the unbelieving *Jews*, that accused them of doing things *contrary to the Decrees of Cæsar*, and by this means set all that City in an *uproar*. But how hardly soever they were used there, they found a better Treat-

Treatment from the *Bereans*, of whom St. *Luke* ſaith, *that they were more noble*, εὐγενέστεροι more ingenuous, *than thoſe in* Theſſalonica, *in that they received the word with all readineſs of mind, and Searched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo*, &c. Sermon III.

In which words;

1. We are directed to the Rule, by which all Points of Faith are to be determined; and that is the Scriptures.

2. There is the Capacity all Perſons are in to judge of that Rule; for the Words are ſpoken indifferently of the *Jews* in *Berea*, the Auditory, to whom St. *Paul* preached; that they *Searched*.

3. Here are the Qualifications of ſuch as would judge aright, and they are Sincerity and Diligence: They were εὐγενέστεροι more candid, and they *Searched the Scriptures daily*.

4. There is the way and means which are to be uſed in the Interpretation of the Rule; and that is by comparing the Doctrine with Scriptures; there they Searched, *whether thoſe things were ſo*.

5. There is the Succeſs of this courſe, *Therefore many of them believed*.

I have already treated of the Three firſt of theſe in the foregoing Sermon, and have ſhewed the Scriptures to be the

Rule of Faith; that it is the privilege of all to repair to that Rule for ſatisfaction; and that by Searching, they may arrive thereby to a Knowledge and Underſtanding of that Rule.

Sermon III. John 5. 39.

And I ſhall now proceed to the way of Interpretation, and the conſideration of the courſe that is to be taken for the better underſtanding of the Scriptures.

In diſcourſing upon which.

1. I ſhall premiſe ſome things with reference both to the Perſpicuity and Difficulties of Scripture; for it muſt be acknowledged that the Sacred Books have a mixture of both.

2. I ſhall lay down ſuch Rules, as may be of uſe for the better Interpretation of it.

As to the former I premiſe,

1. When we ſpeak of the Scriptures, we take it for granted, that the Tranſlation of it, generally ſpeaking, renders the true ſenſe of the Original; that is, the Original and Tranſlation are to him that underſtands both, as it were but one Book; and ſo again to him that underſtands the Tranſlation only, it is the ſame as if he underſtood the Original.

And that this is ſo, is evident; becauſe all Tranſlations (though not Expoſitions) of what Language, Church, or

Age

Age ſoever, do for the moſt part agree: And if a *Catena* or Draught were made of them, as there was of the ancient Verſions, it would appear ſo to be, beyond all Contradiction. Sermon III.

So that if any Stranger utterly unacquainted with the Chriſtian Doctrine, or the Tranſlations, but ſkill'd in thoſe Languages, ſhould compare them, he would be able to ſay that the Book was the ſame, and only differ'd in the Language; as the Ancient, *viz.* the *Greek*, and *Arabick*, and *Syriack*; or Modern, *viz.* *Engliſh*, *French*, *German*, or *Italian*, &c.

And let Men differ as they will in their particular Opinions, let them be *Jews*, as were the Tranſlators of the *Septuagint*; Apoſtates, as was *Aquila*; *Marcionites*, as *Theodotion*; *Ebionites*, as *Symmachus*: yet unleſs in thoſe points in which they induſtriouſly corrupt the Text to ſerve a Cauſe, and wilfully and apparently depart from the Original, there is a general conſent among them in the main. *V. Juſt. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. & Tertul. contr. Jud. c. 9.*

Which is a clear proof,

2. That the Scriptures were wrote ſo as to be underſtood; for elſe how could different Tranſlators, unacquainted with the Language or Writings of each other, ſo exactly hit upon the ſame rendition of it?

Sermon III.

And indeed it would be too bare-fac'd a Reflection upon Almighty God, by whoſe Direction and Inſpiration the Scripture was wrote (as I have ſhewed) to ſuppoſe that ſuch a Book thus proceeding from ſo Divine a Hand, and upon ſo noble a Deſign as the Revelation of God's Will to Man, ſhould labour under ſuch a defect as the compoſitions of Men of common Underſtanding are not guilty of.

Certainly it is as poſſible to Write ſo as to be underſtood, as it is to Speak and be underſtood; and ſince Writing is but a kind of Speech, Speech may as well be ſuppoſed unintelligible as Writing; and if it were ſo, both the pleaſure and benefit of Converſation would be prevented and loſt.

And what a preſumption is it to deny that to God which we give to Men; and that when we grant that Men not only can, but do expreſs their Thoughts plainly upon occaſion by Writing, that God either has not that Power, or Will; but where he pretends to declare his Will to Mankind, he ſhould, as God ſaith to *Job* 38. 2. *Darken counſel by words without knowledge*; and write ſo as not to be underſtood, which is to write to no purpoſe, but only to fill the World

World with Contention, as if what is call'd Revelation were not *to ſend Peace*, *but* in the Letter of it, *a Sword* of Strife among Mankind? Sermon III.

If we own God for the Author, we muſt ſay, that the Scriptures were wrote that they might be underſtood.

3. We may ſuppoſe farther, that at the time when the Scriptures were written, they were intelligible by thoſe that were Cotemporaries with the Writers, and underſtood the Language they were Written in. Which was a great advantage they had above all After-Ages; for there is no Nation but what has peculiar Cuſtoms, to which Forms of Speech often relate; nor is there any Language which hath not Idiotiſms and Phraſes of their own; and therefore where theſe are not to be underſtood, or are not obſerved, the ſenſe is loſt or prejudiced, and perplexed, as I ſhall preſently ſhew.

4. We may reaſonably conclude, that what had no immediate reference to the Perſons then in being, nor to the Ages, and Cuſtoms, and Proprieties then in uſe; but contained common matters, and was clothed in common Forms of Speech, was intelligible to others that did not live in thoſe Ages, and generally as intelligible as to thoſe that did. Such is

Sermon III.

the Decalogue, which may be underſtood by us in this Age as well as thoſe that were at Mount *Sinai*, at the firſt delivering of it.

5. The Scriptures being to continue to the World's end, and, generally ſpeaking, being written for the uſe of all Men of all Ages and Nations, they muſt conſequently be Intelligible in the main, and capable of being underſtood by all Perſons in all times; or elſe they were written in vain: For to what purpoſe ſhould they be preſerved, or ſhould they oblige Mankind to read them, if they were not to be underſtood?

6. I may ſay, that in Fact the Scriptures are plain in all things that are intended for the uſe of all, and that are neceſſary for all to know, in point of Faith or Practice.

Such are,

(1.) All the Principles of Natural Religion, ſuch as the Being of a God, and his Creation of all Things; the Worſhip to be given to him, the Government of the World by Providence; the Immortality of the Soul, and a State of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life.

Theſe every one may underſtand as he reads them in Scripture, and which no Man can read, but he muſt find out and underſtand. (2.) Such

(2.) Such is the Hiſtory of Providence, that is, God's proſpering the Good and puniſhing wicked Nations; his preſerving a Church under all the Storms of the moſt violent Perſecutions: His carrying on the train of Prophecies through all interruptions; and accompliſhing them at the time, and after the manner long before prefixed. Sermon III.

Theſe are Matters of Fact, and what are obvious to all in the reading of them.

(3.) Such is matter of pure Revelation, and eſpecially that which concerns the Redemption of Mankind by Jeſus Chriſt. As to his Perſon, that he was before the Worlds, which were made by him: That *in the fulneſs of time*, according to the ancient Predictions, he became Man, and was made Fleſh: That he wrought Miracles in Confirmation of his Miſſion from God, and of the Doctrine he Taught and Profeſſed to receive from the Father: That he was Crucified and died as a Sacrifice for the Sins of all Mankind: That he roſe again the Third Day from the Dead, and aſcended into Heaven: That he ſent down the Holy Spirit, and continues at the Right Hand of God to be our Mediator; and that we are with reſpect to that Mediation, to

Sermon III.

offer up all our Prayers in his Name to the Father: And that he is to come at the End of the World to Judgment, and ſhall raiſe the Dead, and ſummon them all before his Tribunal.

(4.) Of the like kind are all the Proofs and Confirmations of the Doctrine of our Saviour, before ſpoken of under another Character; ſuch are Prophecies and Miracles. Prophecies, which though ſometimes obſcure in point of Phraſe, yet there are thoſe that are without difficulty; as that of *Joſiah* and *Cyrus* by name, that of the place of our Saviour's Birth, the Stock and Lineage, the Tribe and Family he ſhould proceed from; the time he ſhould ſuffer in, *&c.*

And the other Atteſtation by Miracles is too evident to be inſiſted upon.

(5.) Of this ſort are the terms of Salvation, among thoſe things which are plainly ſet down in Scripture; we may find whatever relates to Faith and Manners: And in theſe two are comprehended all that is neceſſary to Salvation. So that whatever is not plainly ſet down in Scripture, or evidently inferr'd from it, is not neceſſary to Salvation, as St. *Auſtin* ſaith.

Aug. de Doct. Chriſt. l. 2.

Now I am apt to think, that no Perſon that comes unprejudiced, I mean not pre-

prepoſſeſs'd with contrary Principles, or corrupt Affections, but muſt needs own the Scripture to be clear in the Points before rehearſed, if ſo be he reads it with an ordinary Diligence and Care. Sermon III.

But will it be ſaid, Are there not obſcurities allowed to be in Scripture, and difficulties which are not to be ſurmounted? And what is a clearer proof of this, than the different Expoſitions we meet with, and the different Opinions Men eſpouſe, and therefore eſpouſe them becauſe they conceive them to be the dictates of Holy Writ?

1. I anſwer; That is no Objection againſt it; for then there can be nothing certain, if the calling it in queſtion will render it uncertain.

2. This indeed has been an Argument ſet up to overthrow the Authority of Scripture, and ſome have been ſo impertinent as to make uſe of the various Conſtructions and Significations of words, to ſerve this impious cauſe.

And ſo among other things, one quotes that ſaying of *Quintilian*, *There are innumerable kinds of words of ambiguous and various ſignification; ſo that it ſeemed to ſome of the Philoſophers, that there was no word that doth not ſignify many things.* *Philos. Scripturæ Interp. c. 3. n. 16. & n. 25. & c. 4.*

But

Sermon III.

But if this be a reaſon why the Scripture is obſcure, and the Senſe not attainable, then it is common with that to all Books whatſoever, not excepting even that Book which the Author thought ſo well of, as to publiſh for the information of the World.

If this were of any force, then it would be to no more purpoſe to ſpeak than to write; becauſe the words we uſe are capable of different ſenſes, as well as what we write.

This is a way of arguing that proves too much, and goes too far, and ſerves no more than an Argument that falls ſhort, and comes not up to the Caſe in hand.

This would make the Divine Oracles like thoſe of the Devil, to be no other than *Ænigma*'s and Riddles, as if, in the New-coined phraſe of the Members of the *Romiſh* Church, they were but the *various figures of Ink upon a Book:* Or ſerved to no other uſe than white Paper, to write what you will upon, and make what Sence out of it that a fruitful Brain can invent.

3. Though there are obſcurities in Scripture, it falls upon ſuch Points as are not in themſelves neceſſary, and not neceſſary to all; and notwithſtanding which,

which, a Perſon may be ſaved though he dye ignorant of them, or of the Sence of thoſe Scriptures which contain them. For there is no greater ſign of their not being neceſſary, than that they are not what we can underſtand, or are not plainly to be found in Scripture. Sermon III.

4. Though there are obſcurities in Scripture, yet they are nothing in compariſon to the plain Texts of it; and which no more hinder us from underſtanding the plain, than the Spots in the Sun prevent us of the Light of it.

The obſcurities are like the various Readings, of little conſequence, and importance, (as I have ſhewed) and nothing comparable to what remains intire and perſpicuous. They are only *ſome things that are hard to be underſtood.* Sermon *Fourth and Sixth of the laſt Year.* 2 Pet. 3. 16.

But how many are the plain and intelligible, and eſpecially of things neceſſary to Salvation?

5. When, I ſay, there are obſcurities in Scripture, and that they fall upon leſs neceſſary Points, I grant that even thoſe obſcure parts are not without their uſe; it being here, as in the Heavens, where the cloudy Stars that ſcatter a faintiſh light through the Galaxy or Milk-way, though not diſcernable but by a Teleſcope; yet (if we may judge of what we do

do not know of Nature, by what we do) have their uſe, and by their Influences, without doubt, ſerve a noble Deſign. So though the obſcure Texts of Scripture afford a dim light in compariſon, and what we can at preſent give but a ſlender account of; yet we our ſelves have ſometimes perceived, when we have come by ſearching to underſtand any of them that we underſtood not before, that they prove of very great advantage; as they ſerve to confirm the plain, and do give light to thoſe that were otherwiſe, and were it not for the light given by theſe, would have remained, obſcure.

Sermon III.

And indeed, Almighty God has ſo wiſely ordered it, that as there are ſome Works in Nature we do underſtand, and ſome we do not; ſome ſerve a leſſer, and ſome a greater end: So has he alſo *temper'd* the body of Scripture together, the difficult with the eaſy, the obſcure with the plain, the leſs neceſſary with the greater, that our Induſtry may be excited by our endeavour to underſtand them; and our labour be rewarded by the underſtanding of them: That we may *Search* as the *Bereans* here did, and upon our Searching, may, as they, come to *believe* and underſtand, or be confirmed in our belief of them.

Toward

Toward the better understanding of which, 2. I shall direct to some Rules that may be of singular use to us in our Search and Inquiry. Sermon III.

1. Where in the first place it is advisable, that we be very conversant in the Sacred Text; and as the *Bereans, search it daily*; by which means much of the obscurity will wear off; and the Phrase, and Style, and way of arguing will be more evident, and the matter of it make not only the stronger impression on our Minds, but be clear'd up also insensibly to us. We see how much difficulties are lessened by practice, as it is in learning the Alphabet, and the first Principles of any Language or Science; and when we in the beginning struggled with our selves, and used a kind of force to bend our Minds to it, by degrees the difficulties abated, and we became complete Masters of the Matter that lay before us. So it is in reading the Scriptures, where by use we are wonderfully let into the meaning of them. For this reason it was that the Prophets were read in the Synagogue every Sabbath-day, as is implied, *Acts* 13. 27: And why also the Scriptures were read as well when not understood, as when they were; according to the practice

ctice of the Eunuch. For to what pur-
Sermon pose would it have been for him when
III. alone, without an Interpreter, to have
Acts 8. 30, read *Isaias* the Prophet upon such an ob-
31. scure Argument, if by reading it he might not have been some help to himself, and by degrees have attained to a farther understanding of it more or less?

And I dare appeal to any that have taken this course, and have daily read the Scriptures, and read them with the like impartiality as other Books, and much more where they have read them with the reverence and attention due to Divine Oracles, whether they have not found the difficulties lessen upon their hands. And if such as daily read those Books with these and the like Qualifications, would but account with themselves for all the difficulties assoyl'd and solved this way, without any other assistance, it would be no unpleasant or unprofitable reflection.

2. Although it be of this advantage to read the Scriptures in course, as was usual in publick in the Synagogues, and in private among Persons piously disposed: Yet it would add much to the rendring the abstruser parts more easy and intelligible, if they began with the plainest, either for Duty or Matter, and then proceed-

proceeded to the more obſcure. For this is a reducing things into a ſtrict and natural Method, and is like the beginning with the beginning of a Book wrote in that way, and ſo gradually proceeding as we are led along from Point to Point, from Propoſition to Propoſition, till we come to the end of that, and the difficulties together. Sermon III.

The Scripture I own is far from being wrote after this humane and artificial Method, but in a way Extraordinary and Divine; and is among other reaſons, compoſed after the manner in which it is, that we may be obliged to uſe a befitting Induſtry in ſearching into the meaning of it; and 'tis certainly one part of that induſtry ſo to order it, that as there is this difference plainly to be obſerved in Scripture, ſo we would thus make an advantage of it by beginning with *Words* and Things *eaſy to be underſtood*, before we attempt to underſtand what is in a Sphere for the preſent above our Capacity; for *ſuch have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat,* Heb. 5. 12, 14. *—which belongeth to them that are of full age, even thoſe who by reaſon of uſe have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil*; and I will add, between things plain

Sermon III.

plain and abſtruſe, more neceſſary and leſs, certain and doubtful.

3. Another Rule for the underſtanding of Scripture, is to be well acquainted with the principal deſign, and the chief Subject of it, whether as to Faith or Practice: For from thence doth ariſe what is uſually called the *Analogy of Faith*; and which will be a Standard upon all occaſions to have recourſe to. For what Senſe is to things ſenſible, and Reaſon to things merely reaſonable, that is the Analogy of Faith to all Interpretations, and according to whoſe Arbitration they muſt ſtand and fall: Of this the Apoſtle gives an Inſtance as to Faith, 1 *John* 4. 2, 3. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every Spirit that confeſſeth that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the Fleſh, is of God. And every Spirit that confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is not of God.*

And if there ſhould be any place of Scripture that ſuch Hereticks would produce in their favour, we may peremptorily conclude, that the meaning they would force upon it, is no more the meaning of that Scripture, than that can be the Spirit of God, *which confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh.*

 4. For

4. For the better underſtanding of Scripture, it is a proper way to compare Scripture with Scripture, the Old Teſtament with the New, the obſcure with the plain. For that which is obſcure and difficult in one place, is uſually explained and made clear in another, as St. *Auſtin*, in the Book before quoted, obſerves. Sermon III.

Toward the more uſeful Application of this Rule, it may be convenient to enquire from whence Difficulties and Obſcurities in Scripture do ariſe; Whether from the Sublimity of the Matter; the Proprieties of Language; the Relation that one thing has to another, as Types; the Modes and Forms of Speech in Matters Prophetical or Figurative; which we may be helped in by this way of compariſon.

When I have juſt before ſaid, That *there is no greater ſign of the matter's being unneceſſary, than when it is what we cannot underſtand, or is not plainly to be found in Scripture:* I mean thereby, not the matter or thing ſpoken of, but the Propoſition: For the Propoſition may be a plain and a very intelligible Propoſition, when the matter of it is inexplicable, and above our Underſtanding. As the Propoſition, *God is a Spi-*

rit, is a plain Propoſition, and as eaſy to be underſtood in reſpect of its Sence and Meaning, as that a Triangle is a Figure conſiſting of Three Angles; but the Matter is vaſtly different; for who can tell what a Spirit is, or can give as adequate a Definition of it, as he can of a Triangle? And yet the Propoſition before-recited, of God's being a Spirit, is as plain to be underſtood, and as neceſſary to be believed; as if it were in its Nature plain, and Intelligible, and that we as perfectly knew what a Spirit is, as we know what a Triangle is: And therefore the obſcurities ariſing from ſuch Sublimity of the Matter, are not to be brought here to account; for they can never be made plainer to us than they are, till our Underſtandings are Elevated and raiſed up to them. 'Tis a Spirit alone that can tell what a Spirit is, and 'tis God only knows himſelf. And though now we have it as plainly Revealed, that *God is a Spirit*, as that God is; yet we muſt be contented neither to have an adequate Notion of God, unleſs we were as God, nor alſo the like Notion of a Spirit, till we become Spirits our ſelves.

Sermon III.

When I ſay again, That it is a ſign of the *Matter's being unneceſſary, that it*

it is not plainly to be found in Scripture; thereby is meant what is plain to ſuch as Search, Enquire and Compare, and know how to argue from it: And if by Search and Enquiry, by comparing and arguing, it comes to be plain, I may as well ſo call it, as if it was in ſo many words therein expreſſed. Sermon III.

There is a very convincing Argument of a Future State in the Scripture quoted by our Saviour, when God ſaith, *I am the God of Abraham*, &c. from whence our Saviour with great ſtrength infers, *God is not the God of the Dead but of the Living*; and ſo thoſe that he is the God of, are alive. But though the force of the Argument is now very evident, by the light our Saviour gives to it, yet I believe few would have obſerved it without that Direction, or to be ſure without taking that Method of comparing Scripture with Scripture. Matth. 22. 32.

For it is by that Rule,

(1.) We come to underſtand the Idiotiſms and Proprieties of the Language in which the Scripture was written; and without attending to which, we ſhall fall very much ſhort of attaining to the ſence of it. Theſe Idiotiſms are common, with the Hebrew, to all Languages, and ſo are no otherwiſe to be underſtood,

derſtood, than by a ſtrict Obſervation of Sermon them.

III. As for Example, Without this Key, how irreconcileable would it be to other Hoſea 6. 6. Texts, to have it ſaid, *God would have* Mat. 9. 13. *mercy and not ſacrifice*; and that our Sa- John 6. 27. viour ſhould require his Diſciples, *not to labour for that meat which periſheth*; and that the Apoſtle ſhould forbid Women 1 Pet. 3. 3. the *adorning themſelves with the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of Gold, or of putting on of apparel?* All of which were notwithſtanding allow'd, and ſome requir'd elſewhere. But now if we attend to the Genius of the Hebrew, and compare one Scripture with the other, we ſhall find, that the *Jews* having no degrees of compariſon, were wont to expreſs compariſons by *Antitheſes* or *Negatives*; and then the ſence of the Negative *Not*, is *not ſo much*; as *labour not*, that is, not ſo much *for the meat that periſheth*, as *for that which endureth to everlaſting life*, &c. And if this be obſerved, we ſhall find there is no contradiction, when in one place Sacrifices are requir'd, and in another, that *God would have mercy and not ſacrifice*; when in one place, it is commanded to 1 Theſſ. 4. 11. *work with their own hands*; and in another, *labour not for the meat that periſheth*, &c.

(2.) By

(2.) By this way of compariſon we come to underſtand the figurative Phraſeology or manner of Expreſſion in Scripture, and we ſhall find that ſuch are not to be underſtood in a proper and literal, but alluſive ſence. Sermon III.

As for inſtance; God is in Scripture ſaid to have Eyes and Hands, Ears and Bowels, which are terms belonging to a Natural and Human Body: And alſo to Laugh, and to be Angry, and to Repent, which are paſſions belonging to Mankind. And yet we read alſo, that *God is a ſpirit*, and ſo hath not a Body, nor any of the parts belonging to it: And that he *is not as Man that he ſhould repent*; and neither is nor can be ſubject to thoſe Infirmities and Paſſions which belong to us. And therefore when ſuch Bodily or Mental Affections and Properties are imputed in words to him, it is in a figurative and improper ſence, and which are ſpoken of him after the manner of Men, and in condeſcenſion to our Infirmity, who are not able to conceive of him as, and according to what he is in himſelf. So that it would be a groſs piece of folly, for the ſake of ſuch figurative Expreſſions (as *Theodoret* ſaith of *Audæus*) to conceive of God as a Corporeal Being; which is to ſay, he is not a Spirit, and *Hæret. Fabul. l. 4.*

Sermon so to make the Scripture inconsistent with it self.

III. Another instance of this kind, is the Assertion of our Saviour, *This is my Body*; which being a Sacramental as well as Figurative Phrase of Speech, recourse must be had to the like Institutions in Scripture, and to what has the nearest resemblance to it; and that is the Passover, the *Jewish* Sacrament, and, as I may so say, their Lord's Supper. Now when we read in the Law, of the *Lord's Passover*, and that they *roasted* and *eat the Passover*, we easily conceive that by it they meant not the Angel's passing over the Houses of the Children of *Israel* (which gave occasion to the Phrase); but the Lamb, which was the Memorial and the Representation of it. So when in Correspondence hereto, we read of our Saviour, that at the Institution of the Lord's Supper, he said of the Bread, *This is my Body*; and that he broke the Bread, and they eat of it; we can reasonably no more understand that his natural Body was then actually broken, and that they did eat his very Body, than we can understand, that when the *Jews* roasted and eat the Passover, they roasted and eat the Angel that passed over the Houses where the Blood was sprinkled. And therefore what was improperly

improperly and figuratively ſpoken of one, was after the ſame manner ſpoken of the other, and alike to be underſtood. Sermon III.

Indeed ſuch Figures and Modes of Speech, are as ſoon underſtood, for the moſt part, as plain and literal Propoſitions.

As when our Saviour is called a *Lamb*, a *Door*, a *Shepherd*, a *Vine*, he was no more really ſuch, nor are ſuch Phraſes any more literally to be underſtood, than that *Herod* was a *Fox*, and the Phariſees *Vipers*, becauſe they were ſo called by our Saviour: And therefore as our Saviour's Auditors as ſoon underſtood him, when he ſpoke after this Figurative, as if in the plaineſt and literal Phraſe of it; ſo one would think they ſhould, and we may be as certain they did underſtand our Saviour, when he ſaid, *This is my Body*, not of a proper human Body, but only by way of Repreſentation, according to the nature of the thing, and thoſe places to which this had an immediate reference.

(3.) By this way of compariſon we come to underſtand the Typical Phraſe of Scripture; which of it ſelf is, like the Types, obſcure.

There is a great Conformity between the Old Teſtament and the New, and

Sermon III.

especially as to what is the main Subject of the Mosaical Law, the Types, Ceremonies, and Rites of it: And where there is this Correspondence and Conformity, we must for the understanding of the one, borrow light from the other. And therefore when the like Forms of Speech are us'd in the New Testament, as are in the Old, it is to be supposed that we are well acquainted with the Old, or that we must have recourse to that for the understanding of the New: Of this the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is an Instance, the Phraseology of which is mostly Legal and Ritual; and so we must be acquainted with those Rites, or the Modes of speaking, to understand it. I shall here content my self with a particular or two of this sort. It is a known case, and very usual in the Old Testament, in the Levitical or Prophetical part of it, to call *a Sin-offering* by the name *Sin*, or in the Translation of the Septuagint, *for Sin*.

τύποι. 1 Cor. 10, 11.

חַטָּאת Lev. 4. 3, 8. Isa. 53. 10. περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

Now this is an Elliptical way of Expression, very customary in those and other Languages; but what is customary and significant in one, yet if literally Translated into another, oft-times looks absurdly; and so it is necessary in such a Translation to supply it by what was before understood,

derſtood, but not expreſſed; as it is in the Caſes aboveſaid. Thus for inſtance, *Heb.* 9. 28. 'Tis ſaid our Saviour *Chriſt was once offer'd to bear the Sins of many; and unto them that look for him, ſhall he appear the ſecond time without Sin unto Salvation.* But thus he appear'd the firſt time, he was then without Sin; and therefore here according to the Subject the Apoſtle is diſcourſing upon, it is to be ſupplied after this manner, *without a Sin-offering.* So it is, *Heb.* 10. 8. and 2 *Cor.* 5. 21. So we have it according to the latter Phraſe of the Septuagint, *Rom.* 8. 3. *God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the fleſh. For Sin,* is a Phraſe rough and abrupt; but if we add to it *by a Sacrifice for Sin,* it is very agreeable and intelligible. Sermon III. περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

Now when there is this Myſtical Relation, and the Goſpel has a reſpect in its Phraſe and manner of ſpeaking, to the Types and Ceremonies of the Law, the Antitype is to be explained by the Type, the New by the Old.

(4.) By this way of compariſon, we become acquainted with the Prophetical way of Writing, and may underſtand what without it would be obſcure.

I have

Sermon III.

I have juſt before obſerved the Relation that is between the Law and the Goſpel; and that if we would underſtand the Goſpel, it is fit to repair to the Law, as to the Phraſe of it; and if we would underſtand the Law in its nobleſt ſence, we muſt repair to the Goſpel. And from this Relation between theſe Two is it, that the Prophecies of Scripture, eſpecially as to the Future State of the Church under the Goſpel, are clothed in the Phraſe of the Moſaical Inſtitutions and Rites. Thus the Succeſs of the Goſpel, and the Enlargement of the Chriſtian Church, is deſcribed under ſuch Characters. Iſai. 2. 2, 3. *It ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, that the Mountain of the Lord's Houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the top of the Mountains, and all Nations ſhall flow unto it.* Iſai. 66. 23. *It ſhall come to paſs from one New-moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all fleſh ſhall come to Worſhip before me* at *Jeruſalem*, v. 20. which, and the like Phraſes were no more literally to be fulfilled, than that we ſhall *eat Bread in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

But now as the Happineſs of the Future State is often deſcribed by ſuch Phraſes as belong to this preſent ſtate, and not to that which they are literally applied

applied to: So the Prophecies concerning the ſtate of the Church under the Goſpel, are frequently exemplified under ſuch Reſemblances and Forms of Speech as ſuited the People of the *Jews*, for whoſe immediate uſe they were wrote; and notwithſtanding which, neither they nor others could poſſibly be led into ſuch a miſtake, as to think that ſuch ſhould the Kingdom of the Meſſias be, as thoſe Expreſſions verbally ſignified; when it was evident from the Prophecies of Scripture, that that Legal State was to be aboliſhed, and alſo that ſeveral of the things in the nature of them were unpracticable. As for example; when it was ſaid, that *from one New-moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another*, that is, Monthly and Weekly, all Nations ſhould come up to Worſhip the Lord at *Jeruſalem.*

And therefore in the Explication of ſuch Phraſes, we muſt not conſider what they exactly ſignify in their firſt and original uſe, but to what purpoſe they ſerve and are applied; and if ſo we do, we ſhall lightly as ſoon underſtand the *New heaven and the New earth*, which St. *Peter* ſpeaks of, 2 *Pet.* 3. 13. as *the Heaven and the Earth* in the Firſt Chapter of *Geneſis:* And as well ſhall we underſtand

Sermon III.

derſtand *Babylon* and *Euphrates* in the Myſtical ſence of the *Apocalypſe*, as we do in the Hiſtorical Books of Scripture.

But above all, there is nothing doth ſo lay open the Secrets and Myſteries of Prophecy, as the Event; for by that means, when it is fulfilled, it is as clear as if it had been Hiſtorically related. And as if we look back from the Event to the Prediction, we the better underſtand that Prediction, which without the Knowledge and Obſervation of the Event we could not perhaps have underſtood: So by comparing what yet remains to be fulfilled, with what has been already fulfilled, we have a uſeful Key for the underſtanding of the one by the other; the obſcure by the plain, and what we do not know the meaning of, by what we do.

Thus, for inſtance, we may underſtand the Prophetical Schemes of Speech, concerning the deſtruction of a Nation, by comparing one of the Teſtaments with the other; or what is to be fulfilled with what has been fulfilled. So when in the Old Teſtament we find it Prophetically threatned of *Babylon*, *Idumea*, *Egypt*, *&c.* that the *Stars of Heaven, and the Conſtellations thereof ſhall not give their light* —that *all the Hoſt of Heaven ſhall*

Iſai. 13. 10. 34. 4. Ezek. 32. 7, 8.

ſhall be diſſolved, and fall down as the Leaf of a Vine — And when that we read in *Daniel*, the little Horn *caſt down ſome of the Hoſt and of the Stars to the ground, and ſtamped upon them:* We have a Key to unlock the Myſterious Expreſſions of the ſame kind in the New Teſtament. As when 'tis ſaid (if it be to be underſtood of the deſtruction of *Judea*) that *the Sun ſhall be darkned, and the Moon ſhall not give her light, and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven*; and that *a third part of the Sun, Moon, and Stars ſhall be darkned*, &c. it is to be underſtood after the ſame manner as the other. Now by a reflection upon the ſtate of thoſe Nations aboveſaid, as well as the nature of the thing, we find all intended in thoſe Myſtical Expreſſions was, That theſe Nations ſhould be utterly deſtroyed, and all Orders and Degrees of Men (repreſented by the Sun, Moon and Stars) ſhould be diſſolved: And therefore accordingly are we in the Prophetical paſſages in the New Teſtament, to underſtand thoſe Phraſes and Forms of Speech the like way.

Sermon III.

Dan. 8. 10.

Matt. 24. 29.

Revel. 8. 12.

Gen. 37. 9.

It would be endleſs to proſecute this Argument as far as it will bear; for then I might go through the 134 Rules of *Franciſcus Ruizius*; but what I have here laid

Regulæ Intelligendi Scripturas Sacras. Par. 1550.

Sermon III.

laid down is sufficient to help and direct us, generally speaking, in the Interpretation of such Forms of Speech, which often render the sence of Scripture difficult. But God be thanked, there is little of this in comparison of what is plain and easy, and in which the main of a Christian's Duty is concerned. This the experience of every one that is at all conversant in those sacred Books, will confirm, to the silencing of all Cavils, which some Men of Wit, and others of Design, may pretend to the contrary.

For I dare confidently say, That no one can plead ignorance against his Duty, or that he failed in it, because the sacred Pages are not to be understood. What! will such dare to refer their cause to the Judgment-day, and be willing to be determined to Life or Death, to Salvation or Damnation, as they can make this good? Will they put Eternity upon this issue, and insist upon it, That they could not know what they were to believe or do, because the Scriptures that should have informed and directed them, were obscure, uncertain, and unintelligible? If they will not offer this by way of relief or mitigation, then 'tis plain that all the cry of Obscurities, and Difficulties, and Uncertainties, are but

pitiful ſhifts, and ſorry pretences. There are plain places and Books enough and enough, to ſilence all ſuch preſumptuous and arrogant Cavillers. Sermon III.

If we will believe our own Eyes, and credit our own Underſtandings, the Scripture is plain in all that is neceſſary for us to know; and if we do according to what that teaches, and we may learn from it, we ſhall never be wanting in all neceſſary qualifications for that Everlaſting happineſs which is therein revealed, for the promoting of which it was written. *Which God grant to us all through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON IV.

LUKE XVI. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one riſe from the dead.

Irenæus, Origen, Cyril, Hierom, think it not a Parable.

FROM the 19th. Verſe of this Chapter to the end, under the Parable (if I may ſo call it) of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, there is a way propoſed, by which we may beſt judge of the wiſdom and folly, the happineſs and miſery of Mankind. And it is as if our Saviour had ſaid; Suppoſe we a Man as happy as the World can make him, abounding in Proſperity, Wealth, Eaſe and Luxury, that wanted nothing for his Vanity, for he was in a condition honourable and ſplendid, *was cloathed in Purple, and fine Linen*, and Silk; nothing for his

Appetite, for he *fared sumptuously every day*. And when he died, was *buried* with Ceremony and Pomp agreeable to his Quality. Sermon IV.

Suppose we on the other hand a Person as miserable as this World can make him, poor so as to *beg*; *full of Sores* and Ulcers, so as not able to help himself; destitute of Friends, so as to be *cast* at the Rich Man's *gate*; hunger-starved so as to need *the* very *crumbs which fell from the other's table*; contemned so as not to be regarded though lying at the *gate*, in the passage and view of all; or if taken notice of, yet so as not to be relieved; naked, so as not to have wherewith to cover his Body, or to defend his *sores* from the cold, and that found more pity among the *dogs* than Men, while alive (for they *came and licked his sores*); and when dead through want, pain and anguish, found as little charity to bury him. Thus far we find them as unlike as can be in their present condition. τὰ ἕλκη. ἐβέβλητο.

But now let us follow them beyond the Grave, and see what becomes of them in the other World. There we find the poor *Lazarus*, that once pitiful, contemptible, necessitous wretched Creature, that wanted what the Dogs had here, the *crumbs of the Table*, taken care of at his Mat. 15. 27.

Sermon IV.

his death by the Holy Angels, and *carried* by them into a place of safety and rest, comfort and happiness, where *Abraham* was, and there preferr'd to a place of honour and kindness; for he lay *in Abraham's Bosom*, having no poverty, nor sores, nor contempt, nor any of the *evil things* he received in his Life time here.

This he had because of his afflictions that he endured, and bore with admirable patience; because of his steady dependance upon God, and an humble submission to him in the most deplorable condition.

On the other hand, the Rich Man when he died went to Hell, where he had none of the Ease and Luxury, the Respect and Honour, none of the good things he received in his life-time, but was *tormented in a flame*, wanting *water* there as much to *cool his tongue*, and quench his insatiable thirst, as *Lazarus* did before the *crumbs which fell from his Table* to satisfy his hunger. There he was, and there he was to abide, for there was *a great Gulph fixed*, that rendred him as uncapable of receiving relief in the other World, as he was neglectful and unwilling to give it to such as needed in this.

This he had for his Pride and Unmercifulness,

cifulness, for his Contempt of God, and of others better than himself. This he was too late sensible of as to himself; *he lift up his eyes*, but he was *in torments*; he cried to his *Father Abraham*, but he proves inexorable; he calls for mercy, but is minded of his former ingratitude to God, and his uncharitableness to others, and is put to silence with a *Son remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*, ver. 25. Sermon IV.

When he could not prevail for himself, he then turns his thoughts towards his *Five brethren*, whom he left behind, that were as careless, and so likely at last to be as miserable as himself, and intreats *Abraham* that *Lazarus* might be sent *to testify unto them*, how it was with him, and how it would also be with them unless they repented, *ver.* 27. To which *Abraham* replies, *ver.* 29. *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* But that doth not satisfy him, and he urges farther: *Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they will repent, ver.* 30. This he speaks from his own Experience, who had *Moses and the Prophets* as well as they, and yet he was as secure and careless, as if he had never heard or knew what they Taught; and therefore unless some other Expedient

Sermon IV.

be thought of, or some other means used, they are like in the conclusion to be as miserable as himself; and surely that, if any, would prevent it, *if one went from the dead.* But to this *Abraham* replies in the Text, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, though one rose from the dead*; that is, if they give no Credit nor regard to what is contained in their Writings concerning a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, they are incurable, neither *will they be perswaded* to repent, (as it is *ver.* 30.) *though one rose from the dead.*

That there is a Future State of Happiness or Misery, in which the Souls of Men do live after a separation from their Bodies, has been in all Ages universally received: But yet was not so convincingly to be proved from the sole light of *Reason*, but that a fuller evidence of it was very desirable: For which there are but two ways, Either that of Divine Revelation, by persons Divinely Inspired; Or by the return of one from the Dead, who was before known to the Living. And these are the ways taken here into consideration by our Saviour, in the case before us: Where there may be three sorts of persons concern'd.

1. Those

Sermon IV.

1. Those that had not *Moses* and the Prophets, and were wholly without a Revelation; as was the case of the Heathens: And *how shall they believe, who have not heard?* Rom. 10. 14.

2. Those that had *Moses* and the Prophets, and yet were incredulous, and did not believe what *Moses* and the Prophets relate concerning a Future State. Such were the *Sadducees, who held there was no resurrection, angel, nor spirit* existing out of a Body. Matt. 22. 23. Acts 23. 8.

3. Those that had *Moses* and the Prophets, and did believe what was therein revealed, concerning the Soul's Immortality and a Future Life, but were not thereby perswaded to repent. Such were the *Pharisees*, who professed to believe what the *Sadducees* denied: And of this sort were the Rich Man (here spoken of) and his Five Brethren supposed to be.

Now toward the conviction of each of these, it might be supposed, that if one rose from the dead, the former would be perswaded to believe, and the latter to repent.

Thus the Heathens reasoned, who had no Revelation. As that Excellent person *Canus Julus* (that *Seneca* speaks of) who just before his Execution said to

his Friends, * *Ye are inquisitive to know whether the Souls are Immortal; I shall now know.* And he promised, † *If he found it so, that he would go about among his Friends, and would inform them what was the state of departed Souls.*

* Vos quæritis an Immortales animæ sint. Ego jam sciam.

† Si quid Explorâsset, circumiturum amicos, & indicaturum, qui esset animarum status. De Tranquil. c. 14.

And the same *Seneca*, when discoursing to *Lucilius* about the behaviour of *Bassus Aufidius*, how dying he spake of Death as a Friend, and what a confirmation this gave to the Doctrine of the Souls Immortality, he adds, * *But I suppose you would more firmly believe it, if one should return to life again, and should declare that he found no evil in death.* To this they gladly repaired as an evidence where they found it. And therefore *Plato* produceth the instance of *Erus Armenius*, that after he had been dead Twelve days, revived, and gave much such an account of the other State, as we have in this Parable.

* Plus ut puto haberet fidei apud te, si quis revixisset, & in morte nihil mali esse narraret Expertus. *Epist.* 30.

De Rep. l. 10.

But 'tis the case of Revelation we Christians are more immediately concerned in, and which our Saviour here speaks to, and prefers before the Testimony of one rising from the dead.

The way here proposed concerning the coming

coming of one from the dead, has somewhat of common Experience on its side. For we see that notwithstanding the clear Revelation of another state in Scripture, and the belief that Men have of it, yet generally they are but little affected with these Arguments, though allowed to be of the greatest Importance, because they lie dead in a Book, and are proposed to them by such as have no more personal Experience of these things than themselves, having never been out of this world, nor had any sight of, or conversation with the other.

But now if a special Messenger should be sent from the other world; a *Lazarus* who was known to them when alive, and known by them to be dead; one that had been an ocular Witness of the things he spoke of and related, and should tell them, that as there is a state of Happiness for good Men, so a state of Misery for the wicked, a state of Misery without ease, respit, or hope of deliverance, and confirmed all by his appearance, surely this would move them: Surely no heart so hard, but this must penetrate; no mind so stupid, but this must awaken; no Sinner so incorrigible, but this must reclaim. And it may be left to every one to judge, Whether if there were

Sermon IV.

such an Apparition that should come upon this terrible Errand, any one could see and hear it with the same calmness and indifference, as he hears a Sermon, or reads a Chapter in the Bible upon this serious Argument.

So that the advantage seems to be much on the side of the Apparition; and the Proposal here made, agreeable to the Common sense of Mankind.

But how probable a course soever this seems to be, yet our Saviour here determines on the contrary, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither*, &c. Which Answer may be resolved into these Two parts.

1. That the Arguments contained in Scriptures, are sufficient to perswade Men to repent.

2. When Men disregard the Holy Scriptures, (the ordinary means of Salvation) so as not to be perswaded to repent by the Arguments therein contained, they will not be perswaded by means extraordinary, and *though*, for example, *one should rise from the dead.*

The first of these, (*viz. That the Arguments contained*, &c.) is supposed, *ver.* 29. when *Abraham* saith, *they have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them:* And this the other doth not deny.

Now

Now the chief Arguments relating to this Subject are briefly touched upon in this Parable; which are these: Sermon IV.

1. That the Souls of Men are Immortal. This is implied when the Rich Man and *Lazarus* are said to be in Being after they were dead, *ver.* 22.

2. That the State into which the Souls of Men are disposed after death, is a State of Recompence, *Abraham* saith, *ver.* 25. *He is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

3. That that State of Recompence is a State of unchangeable Happiness to some, and of endless Misery to others, *ver.* 26. *Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you* [to relieve you], *cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence* [for relief.]

4. That Men are disposed to Happiness or Misery there, according to their behaviour in this World, *ver.* 25. saith *Abraham, Son, remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

These are Considerations of such force and consequence, that this miserable Person desires not that *Lazarus* should be sent

Sermon IV.

sent to argue upon them with his Five Brethren, but to *testify* concerning their reality.

Arguments they are of such force, that he that will not by these be perswaded to repent, will never be perswaded by any other. But though this be all granted to be true (as it's supposed), yet in his Opinion, as the Case would admit farther evidence, so it seemed to need it; and therefore if this extraordinary course were taken of sending one from the dead, *they would* (in his Opinion) certainly *repent*, who with the ordinary means continue impenitent.

This brings to the second General.

2. When Men disregard the ordinary means of Salvation, and are not to be perswaded to repent by the Arguments revealed in holy Scripture, they will not be perswaded by means extraordinary, and though one should come from the dead to perswade them.

For the resolving of which Point, we are to consider what are the Reasons why the ordinary means of Salvation, such as the holy Scriptures are, prove ineffectual; which cannot be from the want of proper and forcible Arguments; for whatever one from the dead can say to move or perswade, is as plainly deliver'd in Scripture.

Scripture. He cannot more expressly tell them that there is a God, that the Souls of Men are Immortal, that there is a Heaven and a Hell, than the Scripture doth: And therefore if what is thus revealed, and believed upon such Revelation, should not prove as effectual, as what is reported by a special Messenger from the dead; it must be from some Reasons which belong to the one, and not to the other; but that there is no ground for; and therefore from whence can this proceed, but from the excessive love to the things of this Life, and the indulgence Men give to themselves in the enjoyments of it? Whence should this proceed, but from the power of those Lusts and vicious Habits they have contracted? Sermon IV.

And where these and the like causes are, a Messenger from the other World will make no stronger an impression, nor will an impression thereby made, be of any longer continuance, than in the other Case: But that he that will not be persuaded by *Moses* and the Prophets, will not be persuaded though one come from the dead.

And this I shall make good,

1. By parallel and suitable Cases and Instances.

2. By

Sermon IV.

2. By a particular inquiry into the causes of Impenitence, which will hold in one case as well as the other.

1. By parallel cases.

As,

(1.) If means as extraordinary, and more extraordinary than the coming of one from the dead, have failed in this point, and not perswaded Men to Repentance, we have as little reason to expect, nor can it reasonably be presumed, that the coming of one from the Dead, should perswade and become effectual.

As for instance; Let us consider the Case of *Pharaoh*, before whom such stupendious Miracles were wrought, and upon whom such astonishing Judgments were inflicted, as could not in reason be supposed resistible: When the Waters, Earth, and Air, Beasts, Fishes, and Fruits of the Earth, Men and Children, either felt or were made the instruments of Divine Vengeance. Could it be thought that when the Waters were turned into Blood, and Frogs covered the face of the Earth, and the Dust of it was converted into Lice, and the Plague of Flies followed that of Lice; and Murrain, Flies; and Boils, the Murrain; and Hail, Boils; and Locusts, Hail; and Darkness Locusts; and the killing of the First-

Firſt-born, the Darkneſs; that he ſhould yet be ſo obſtinate as not to let the People of *Iſrael* go; and when he did, ſhould follow them into the midſt of the Sea? Could diſappointment, vexation, and revenge, ſo far infatuate him, that Miracle after Miracle, Scourge upon Scourge, could not perſwade him, nor the ſenſe of ſo imminent a danger ſtop him in his carier, but that he perſiſted in his firſt reſolution, and blinded thus with Rage, purſued it to his deſtruction? Can it be ſuppoſed now, that one from the dead could more have prevailed upon him than this Scene of Judgments? Could it have come with ſo much Terror? Or if it ſhould, may not the Sinner be alike obſtinate and infatuated? May not the like Paſſions and ſenſual Affections, or a habit of Sin, keep a Perſon from hearkening to, or following the Advice of one come from the dead?

Sermon IV.

Exod. 7. 8, 9, 10.

Let us conſider again, how it was with the *Iſraelites*, who had not only been Spectators of thoſe Miracles and Judgments in *Egypt*, but ſtood ſafe in the midſt of them; that were preſerved, directed, and fed by a continued Series of Miracles, and yet were not only upon every occaſion tempting and provoking God by their diſtruſt, impatience and murmur-

Deut. 1. 32. Pſalms 78. 22. 32. 56. 106. 24. Nehem. 9. 16.

murmuring, but were for returning in-
Sermon to *Egypt* again.

IV. Thus it was also with their Posterity in our Saviour's time, who notwithstanding the plain fulfilling of their ancient Prophecies in him, notwithstanding the Innocency of his Life, the Purity, Sanctity, and Evidence of his Doctrine, the Power of his Miracles, changing the course of Nature as he pleased; healing the Sick, opening the Eyes of such as were born blind, casting out Devils, and raising the Dead. Nay, notwithstanding his Resurrection, and the unquestionable confirmation of it, yet continued obstinate and incredulous, and what they could not deny, would impute to *Beelzebub*.

Mat. 12. 24.

Now what comparison is there between the coming of one from the Dead, and this Case? Or what reason is there to conceive that a wicked *Jew* should have been more effectually reclaimed from a vicious course of Life, and be made a Penitent by the coming of one from the Dead, than the *Jewish* Infidel should be made a Convert by all those numerous Miracles, and become a Christian? And why may not the one be as well Impenitent, as the other an Infidel?

2. It

2. It may be supposed in reason, that what a Person hears from another, should in a matter of Importance, alike affect him in one Case as in another: And if he is not perswaded by the one, there is no reason to expect he should be prevailed upon by the other. Sermon IV.

Such indeed is the Testimony of one rising from the dead, who must be acknowledged to be a very fit Evidence concerning the reality of a Future State, and the condition of Separate Souls in it, as he has been personally acquainted with it, and had a part in it.

But such also is the Testimony of a trembling Sinner, that after a vicious course of Life, entring upon the confines of Death, and expecting every moment to be snatched away by that inexorable Enemy, feels now the Anguish no less than he formerly relished the Pleasures of his Sin; that cries out in the bitterness of his Soul, That he is sensible, but he fears too late, of his former Folly: That he is now prey'd upon by a Thousand Vipers, and feels a Hell in himself before he descends into it.

And in this Agony calls upon all about him, and the once Sworn Companions in his Vices, to take warning by him, and no longer to entertain themselves with

Sermon IV.

the Charms of those noxious Pleasures he is now burdened with the guilt of, and would not for a World repeat, if he was to live his Life over again.

Is not here a living and present Testimony? And if one should come from the Dead, can he say more, or can his Testimony be of greater force concerning the State he comes from, than this of the awakened Penitent, if not despairing Sinner, is, concerning the Evil, the Guilt, and Terror of Sin?

And yet if this be not attended to, or the force of it be soon carried off by a Glass of Wine, and the charms of Company and Temptation, or tract of Time; Can it be supposed that the same Event may not happen to the other? And will not the hardned and impenitent Sinner as much despise, or as soon forget the admonitions of this ghostly Monitor, as those of a dying desponding Friend?

3. It may be expected that what a Person sees himself, should more affect him, than what he hears only by the report of others. And if what he sees, (though in a matter of necessity and importance) makes little or no impression upon him; how can it be supposed, that what he hears only from another should affect him? And this is the case; For if one

came

came from the Dead to bear Witness to the truth of a Future State of Recompence, and of the Misery of impenitent Souls in it, it's only Testimony and Report, and what can neither be of that certainty nor force, as if the Person to whom he comes upon this Errand, had himself been in that State. Sermon IV.

But now there are those things which a Person sees, and which should in reason, according to the nature of the things, as much move him, as the Testimony of one coming from the Dead.

And of this kind is Death, which we every day have in view, and are no more secured against the very next moment, than those that are already departed.

The plain consequence of which is this, That 'tis then our greatest wisdom so to order our selves and all our affairs, that we may meet it without surprize or terror, and may live as we would wish we had done, when that fatal Hour doth approach.

And yet if we take a view of Mankind, we find them generally as secure, as if they alone were immortal; or as improvident, as if they had Death under such an obligation, that it must give

Sermon IV.

them time and leisure sufficient to put all things in order, before it shall proceed to execute its Sentence.

Now if in a matter so apparent, sensible, and certain, there is so little, where there ought to be the greatest concernment, and Mankind is so difficultly moved, that they either don't consider, or the Consideration of it makes them no wiser or better; what reason is there to imagine, that the Testimony of another, though it be one from the Dead, should make any lasting impression upon them, and perswade them to repent?

4. What a Person feels himself, should in reason more affect him, than what he hears or sees of others.

And if what he himself feels makes little or no impression upon him, 'tis not to be conceived, that what he only sees or hears should move him.

In confirmation of which, we may reflect upon the common State and Behaviour of Mankind, in the Judgments and Afflictions that befall them, the Dangers they are in, the Terrors they are under. In which and the like Cases, we shall find them too often insensible and incorrigible, or inconstant and unresolved.

Some-

Sermon IV.

Sometimes they are insensible under the severest Judgments: As it was with *Ahaz*, who for his Idolatry was delivered up to his Enemies; On the East, the King of *Assyria*; on the North, the King of *Israel*; on the South, the *Edomite*; on the West, the *Philistines*, invade and spoil his Territories; as we have it, 2 *Chron.* 28. 5, 6, 17, 18.

And yet when brought thus low for his Transgressions, it's said of him, *In the time of his distress he trespassed yet more against the Lord*, ver. 22.

At other times, if sensible, yet they are inconstant, and in the event prove incorrigible. As it was with the *Israelites*, Psal. 78. 34, *&c. When he slew them, then they sought him, and enquired early after God*, &c. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth*, &c. *For their heart was not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.*

Now can it be supposed that an Apparition of one from the Dead should do more than these; and that He should by that be disposed to repent, Whom the severest Judgments left impenitent?

Or suppose the Sinner terrified hereby, and melted into an affectionate temper; yet have we not examples of that

Sermon IV.

kind every day, of Persons that after all the Terrors they have been under, are set no nearer to a true Repentance; and tho' they seem for a while by some good Resolutions to make towards the Kingdom of Heaven, are *not able to enter*, (as our Saviour expresses it) *Luke* 13. 24.

View we then a Sinner under the power of his Convictions, in the time of Danger and Distress, when he has no way to escape.

How terrified has he been in his own Mind at the approaches of Death! How Grave, Solemn and Serious has it made him! How importunate has he been for Mercy, and for some longer time to finish his Repentance! What Promises, Resolutions, and Vows has he made! What Imprecations has he wished upon himself, if ever he should prove false to them; and desired no Mercy if ever he should break them! Lord, will he say, "Spare me but "this once; try me but once more, and "then if I return to my former Sins, or "neglect to put my self into a capacity for "thy Favour and Mercy, let me never "find it. As it was with *Pharaoh*, who said to *Moses*, *Forgive my Sin only this once, and intreat the Lord that he may take away from me this death only*, Exod. 10. 16.

Now

Now could the Apparition of one from the Dead do more than this? Can we suppose the Sinner more terrified, more seriously concerned and resolved, than when he had his own Conscience thus impartially representing the Case to him, and Almighty God awakening his Conscience by an extraordinary Providence? Sermon IV.

And now let us consider the event of this, and whether after this tender disposition of Mind, and seeming resolution, he is a true Penitent; or that, in the Phrase of the Text, *he will repent*, and that this will necessarily be the issue of it.

Suppose we then this languishing Person rescued out of the jaws of Death by a merciful Providence, and put into the Condition of making a second tryal, and of giving a proof of his thankfulness to God, and of his fidelity to his Sick-bed Vows and Resolutions.

Let us suppose him again breathing in a free Air, and having all the inticing Objects afresh presented to him, that he was before conversant with.

Let us trace him along, and we shall find him, as the terror and sense of his danger wears off, first covertly looking, then remotely following, at last overtaking and closing with the same Temptations;

Sermon IV.

tions; and perhaps plunging himself farther into the same licentious State than before.

Grant we now that there is a just reason for the Sinner's Terror, if the Ghost of his deceased Friend, and the once inseparable Partner in his Vices, should appear, and plainly represent to him the desert of Sin in the Miseries of another Life, and the certainty of his having a Portion in them without Repentance. Grant we (and he must be a Stone rather than a Man, whom it has no influence upon) that he is brought by it into the State of *Belshazzar*, Dan. 5. that his *Countenance* is *changed*, and his *Thoughts* so *trouble him*, that the *joints of his Loins* are *loosed*, and *his Knees smite one against another*. Yet still this may be, and he be no true Penitent, nor this prove a means effectual enough to reform him. For a Man repents no farther than his Will and Temper is changed; and if these remain the same, he no more repents to whom the dead has appeared (whatever Terrors he may be under) than he that was upon the borders of Death: And he may, and will as soon as he, upon occasion, repent of his Repentance. So certainly

certainly true is that which was before observed, That the causes which hinder Men from being persuaded to Repentance by the Arguments of Scripture, will also keep them from being persuaded by Means extraordinary, such as the coming of one from the Dead. And that the *cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things*, will as well render the extraordinary Means ineffectual, as *choke the Word* of God, and make it *unfruitful.* Sermon IV. Mark 4.19.

Let God send all the Plagues of *Egypt*, and yet *Pharaoh* will harden his Heart: Let the Sea be divided, and *Manna* rained from Heaven, and Water break out of the Rock, and the Water of the Rock *follow* them for 40 Years together. Let them have a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by Night as their Guide, and an Angel for their Safeguard, and yet the *Israelites* will be tempting, provoking, and murmuring. Let one come *and do the works which none other Man did*; give sight to the Blind; feet to the Lame; health to the Sick; life to the Dead. Let the Sun be darkned; the Rocks rend; the Graves be opened, and the Dead appear: Nay, let him that did all this, and for whose sake it was done, 1 Cor. 10.4. John 15. 24.

Sermon IV.

rise again from the Dead, and visibly ascend into Heaven; yet the obstinate *Jew* will be incredulous. Let a Ghost appear, and preach over the despised Doctrines of the Soul's Immortality, and the reality of a Future State, and of a Judgment to come, and reinforce it from his own Knowledge and Experience, and verify all this by his return from the Dead: And yet the Sinner, the customary Sinner, is not to be reclaimed; who *like the deaf Adder stops his ears against the voice of charmers, charming never* so powerfully and *wisely*, Psal. 58. 5.

It's then all one, whether it be *Moses* and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, Revelation, or the Resurrection of one from the Dead, when the Temper is otherwise inclined: And if the Honours, Profits, Advantages, and Pleasures of the World do render the one, they will also render the other ineffectual. So true is that, *Wisd.* 4. 12. that *wickedness by bewitching, obscureth the things that are good*; and will disarm all Arguments can be produced, of their Force and Efficacy.

2. I might farther prove this, by considering the reasons why Men don't believe and repent, and the Excuses they make for delays

delays in it, which will as well frustrate the Testimony and Persuasions of one from the Dead, as it doth the Arguments of Divine Revelation. Sermon IV.

(1.) The reasons have been partly shewed already, and they are the prevalency of corrupt Inclinations; the Presence of Temptations; the Habits of Vice; or a Worldly Interest; which are the usual Obstructions to Repentance, and have a greater power over Men to detain them in Sin, than all the Arguments of the Gospel, and the Convictions of their own Minds, have to reclaim them from it. We see that though they have Line upon Line, the most powerful Motives in the World, such threatnings as make them at some times with *Felix* to tremble: Such comfortable Doctrines as make them at other times with *Herod*, to *hear gladly:* Such moving and awakening considerations, as bring them with *Balaam*, to desire to *dye*, and farther than him, to a desire to *live* the Life of the Righteous; yet they soon fail of their force: And the *Felix* was the *Felix* that left his Preacher *Paul* in Bonds: And the *Balaam* was the *Balaam* that as well took, as he *loved the wages of unrighteousness:* And the *Herod* was the *Herod* that beheaded

Acts 24. 25.
Mark 6. 20.
Numb. 23. 10.
Numb. 31. 16.
2 Pet. 2. 15.

John

John Baptist whom he sometime observed Sermon and heard with pleasure.

IV. For all these Passions are like Qualms that soon pass off, and prevail not so far as to alter the Temper. And where persons are thus under the power of their Lusts, they will continue in the same state, if one came from the Dead to warn and reprove them: And therefore if Matt. 14. 2. *John* B. had rose from the Dead, as *Herod* once imagined and believed, it would no more have made him a true Penitent, than the Preaching of that Holy Man did, when alive; as long as *Herodias* was by him to seduce him, and he was contented to be seduced.

(2.) The case is the same with persons in delaying their Repentance; and if the Excuse against the present necessity of it prevail in one case, it will also prevail in the other. So that he that will not be persuaded to a present Repentance, by the Arguments of the Gospel, will not be persuaded by the Testimony and Admonition of one from the Dead.

And upon the whole the Question is, Whether a person may not reason the same way, and as much to his own Delusion, against the Testimony and Persuasions

sions of one from the Dead, as against the Authority and Arguments of Scripture, and at last be as far from Repentance and a present Repentance? Sermon IV.

And whether there is not reason to conclude, That if these and the like Excuses prove sufficient to detain Men in impenitency notwithstanding all the Arguments to the contrary, contained in Scripture; the same will not be of as much force, and have as much influence upon the Sinner, if one should come from the Dead to admonish him?

I am confident that this is not to be gainsaid.

And so the Proposition before laid down remains good, That the reasons for which persons give no heed to, or are not persuaded by the Authority and Arguments of Scripture, to believe and repent, will keep them from giving heed to, and being persuaded by the coming of one from the Dead.

But this is a case I shall not farther prosecute; for it needs Consideration, rather than Proof.

I shall therefore close all with Three or Four Inferences.

1. From hence I infer, That there is no absolute need of any other course to be

Sermon IV.

be taken for the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, than what is already taken; or that extraordinary means should be used, where the ordinary are sufficient.

If there be a Revelation, which is believed certainly to be Divine, and the Arguments contained in that Revelation are sufficient to persuade Men to believe and repent, Then there is no need of Miracles, nor of a Voice from Heaven, nor the Resurrection of one from the Dead. If there be impenitency with reason and proof sufficient to convince and persuade Men, there will be impenitency still, with such proof as is more than sufficient. *These things are written that ye might believe*, Joh. 20. 31. And consequently, what is Written, is sufficient to persuade us to a belief of what is Written.

2. God is not bound to give, nor can Men in reason desire or expect, that he should use an extraordinary course where the ordinary is sufficient; and that one should rise from the Dead for their Conviction, who have *Moses* and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles. It was the Temper of *Thomas*, *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust*

thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe, Joh. 20. 25.

This was the Temper of the incredulous *Jews*, *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe*, Matt. 27. 42. So *Celsus* the Heathen will have it, *If Christ were the Son of God, that he should have been* ὥσπερ ὁ ἥλιος, *like the Sun*; and the miserable person here would have *one rise from the dead.* Origen, l. 2.

There will be no end if once we exceed the ordinary bounds, and expect evidence beyond what is sufficient: For then Men may require to be rapt up into Paradise, as St. *Paul* was; or *to see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God*, as did St. *Stephen:* Nay, they may be as impertinent as *Philip*, and say, *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth.* 2 Cor. 12. 4. Acts 7. 56. John 14. 8.

3. We are bound to believe what we have sufficient evidence for; and to repent when the Reasons and Motives to it are sufficient, though we have not all the Evidence that may be given, and that 'tis possible for God to give. 'Tis possible for God to send a *Lazarus* from the Dead, to *testify* unto the impenitent, concerning the certainty of *a place of torment* in the other World.

And

Sermon IV.

And 'tis possible, though not very probable, (as I have shew'd) that may be a means to awaken such, and bring Them to repentance, whom the Doctrine of Divine Revelation, and the Arguments of Scripture could not prevail upon. But that doth not lessen the Obligation of believing and doing according to Revelation; and which without such farther evidence is of it self sufficient for their Conversion.

4. Those that have the Evidence of Divine Revelation, and yet do not believe and repent according to that Revelation, are wholly inexcusable; *They have Moses and the Prophets*, saith our Saviour, *let them hear them*; for that was sufficient, and all that was necessary to bring them to Repentance here, and Salvation hereafter. And if they that had *Moses* and the Prophets only, were inexcusable, what can those plead, who have not only *Moses* and the Prophets, but Christ and the Apostles, who have brought *life and immortality to light through the Gospel?* And who must therefore have so many more reasons against them, as there are more for the confirmation of the Truth of our Religion, and for the conviction of Unbelievers, than there were

were under the Law: And therefore if any continue in a state of Unbelief and Impenitence under the Gospel, *it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment* than for them. If such do perish, 'tis wholly from themselves: If such do perish, 'tis not through want of Information sufficient to direct them; not through want of Arguments powerful enough to convince them; not through want of Authority sufficient to oblige them; not through want of sufficient Grace to enable them; not through want of Mercy in God, or Merit in a Saviour, or a Will, Desire or Endeavour in both to save them, but from themselves. And how just will then the Sentence of Condemnation be to such! How will all Pleas then be prevented! And how miserable must his case be, that is Condemned by himself before he is Condemned by God!

To conclude,

Here is Life and Death set before us, in the most pressing Arguments; the most powerful Motives; the most persuasive invitations to Repentance. We have here proposed to us all that *Moses* and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles have said to convince us: And we have still,

Sermon IV.

still, through the Merciful Providence of God, means to assist us in it, and time and opportunity for the performance of it. But the time is coming, and will most certainly come, when, if we have not before believed and repented, Neither *Moses* nor the Prophets, neither *Abraham*, nor one *greater than Abraham*, will or can relieve us. And therefore how necessary is it for all now to hearken to *Moses* and the Prophets, to Christ and the Apostles, in this their Day? For if they now hear them not, they can no more hereafter be saved, than they would have been *perswaded though one had rose from the dead.*

SER-

A

SERMON

Preach'd at a

General Meeting

OF THE

CLERGY,

In and about

LEWES,

JULY 30. 1702.

By the Right Reverend,

JOHN Lord Bishop of *CHICHESTER.*

LONDON,

Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT at the *Cross Keys* between the Two *Temple-Gates* in *Fleet-street.* 1708.

1 Theſſ. II. 13.

For this cauſe alſo thank we God without ceaſing, becauſe when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men; but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh alſo in you that believe.

IN the former Chapter the Apoſtle St. *Paul* gives an account of the wonderful Succeſs, which he and his Co-partners, *Sylvanus* and *Timotheus*, met with in preaching the Goſpel, notwithſtanding the fierce oppoſition ſtirr'd up againſt them, as he proceeds to ſhew in this Chapter.

For, ſaith he, *your ſelves know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. But even after that we ſuffered before, and were ſhamefully intreated, as ye know, at* Philippi, *we were bold in our God to ſpeak unto you the Goſpel of God, with much contention.* Ver. 1,

Which Courage and Conſtancy of theirs was a convincing evidence to others, of the truth of what they taught, and of their ſincerity in the Profeſſion of it; as he declares, *ver.* 2.

For, ſaith he, *our Exhortation* or Doctrine *was not of Deceit*, not *a cunningly*

Sermon I.

devised Fable, it was not designed to mislead you into any Error (as the word also signifies) ἐκ πλάνης.

2 Pet. 1. 16. *Nor of Uncleanness*, it was not like the obscene and impure Rites used among the Heathens; or like the Doctrines of some pretended Christians, who suited their Religion to the vilest Inclinations of Mankind, 2 Pet. 2. 18. that *through the Lusts of the Flesh*, they *might allure those that were escaped from them, who live in error.*

Ἐν δόλῳ 2 Cor. 2. 17. *Nor in Guile*; not corrupting, sophisticating, or debasing the Word of God; nor *handling it deceitfully*; so as to be a *Jew* with the *Jew*, and a *Gentile* with the *Gentile*; complying with each in time of danger, *lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ.*

Δολεύσες τὸν λόγον. 2 Cor. 4. 2. Gal. 6. 12.

Neither used we flattering words, seeking by subtle insinuations, and *fair speeches, to deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Rom. 16. 18.

Nor a cloak of Covetousness, and under the pretence of Devotion, Mortification, 2 Pet. 2. 3. and Self-denial, *make merchandize and gain of you.*

Nor of Men sought we glory, setting up our selves as Heads of peculiar Sects, (after the manner of Philosophers) nor being Col. 2. 18. *vainly puff'd up by a fleshly mind, did we intrude into these things, which we have not seen*, nor had the Knowledge and Revelation of (as some have pretended).

And

And when we might have been burdensom, *as the Apostles of Christ*, and under that Character, and by virtue of that Authority, have justly claimed a Maintenance suitable to our Labour and Station. On the contrary, *We were gentle among you, even as a Nurse cherisheth her Children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own Souls.* In confirmation of this, he appeals both to God and themselves, *For*, saith he, *ye remember, Brethren, our labour and travel*, &c. *ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved our selves among you that believe. As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you (as a Father doth his Children) that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his Kingdom and Glory.* He appeals, I say, to them, *Ye know, ye remember, ye are witnesses.* And the Success answer'd his Labour, as he shews in the Text. Sermon I. Ver. 6. &c.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of Men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Sermon I.

In which words we are to consider,

I. What it was the *Thessalonians* here received, *viz. The Word of God:* Or how the Apostle could say it was the Word of God, *and not the Word of Men.*

II. The manner after which it was received; They *received it not as the Word of Men, but as the Word of God.*

I. What is here meant by the *Word of God*; or how the Apostle could say, it was the Word of God, and not the Word of Men.

The Word of God, which the *Thessalonians* are here said to receive, is the Word that the Apostle first preached, and then committed to writing: And this is called *the Word of God*, because it was of God's immediate Inspiration, and is as much the Word of God, and not the Word of Men, as what is spoken by Men, and not from Divine Inspiration, is the Word of Men, and not the Word of God. In prosecution of which Argument, I shall,

1. Consider it in respect of its Authority, as it is the Word of God.

2. As a Rule for our Direction in several cases of importance.

1. I shall consider it in respect of its Authority, as the Word of God; and that I shall do by the following Steps or Propositions.

(1.) That Almighty of God hath revealed

vealed himself, and made known his Will to Mankind, beyond, over and above, what we are taught, or can learn from Nature, Reason, and Observation. Of these St. *Paul* elsewhere takes notice: He reflects upon the Work of the Law *written in our Hearts:* Rom. 2. 14. Upon the Works of the Creation, which are as so many Evidences of the *eternal Power and Godhead*, and upon the Providence of God and his Government of the World; both as to the *Wrath of God which is revealed against all Ungodliness*; and as to his *Goodness, which leadeth to Repentance.* Rom. 2. 4. But though the Being of a God is thereby plainly manifested, so that Infidels are *without Excuse*; yet however, by reason of the imperfection of these ways of Knowledge, and the corruption of Human Nature, there needed a farther Information, Explication, and Evidence; there needed what we call a Revelation; and this defect all Mankind were sensible of, and therefore were disposed to hearken after a Remedy.

Sermon I.

Rom. 1. 20.

Rom. 1. 18, 24.

Thus it was it with the *Thessalonians*, who were before Heathens, and had been involved (as the rest of them were) in gross Idolatry; but upon the preaching of the Apostle, and of his Assistants in that Work, there was a wonderful change, as he saith, *They themselves shew of us, what manner of entring in we had unto you, and how ye*

turned to God from Idols, to serve the living Sermon *and true God,* chap. 1. 9.

I. (2.) This Revelation was made known to particular Persons, chosen of God to be the dispensers of it, for the sake of others, as well as for their own. This was not like Reason, imparted to all Mankind, all were not thus immediately inspired; for then what need had there been of such Teachers as *Paul, Silvanus*, and *Timotheus*, who by a Divine Call, were *allowed and approved of God, to be put in trust with the Gospel*, Ephes. 4. 12. chap. 2. 4. But our Saviour *gave some, Apostles, and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

(3.) That there is an Evidence to be given by them that thus teach, and what in reason may be expected by them that are to be taught, by which the Doctrine may be known and proved to be a Revelation from God, and that it is in truth the *Word of God, and not the Word of Men:* And that is a Divine Testimony; for nothing less than Divine can be an Evidence for what is Divine. If there be a Divine Doctrine in Claim and Pretence, there must be a Divine Power to confirm it. So much is implied here. *Chap.* 1. 5. *Our Gospel came not unto you in Word only, but also in Power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance:* If it

had not come in the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, it could never have come to a πληροφορία, to a full aſſurance. It is upon this the Author to the *Hebrews* grounds his Exhortation, to give *the more earneſt heed to the things they had heard*, becauſe it *began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*, Heb. 2. 1, &c. But now this Evidence as well as the Revelation, was peculiar to the Apoſtolical Age, or the next in Succeſſion: And therefore, ſince the Apoſtles, and all other inſpired Perſons died, and that ſort of Inſpiration and Evidence ceaſed, and as it were died with them, there was ſome other way to be taken for the atteſting and conveyance of this to after Ages. Sermon I.

(4.) And that is, that what was thus taught, and after this extraordinary manner confirmed by the Perſons inſpired, ſhould be by them, or their Direction, committed to writing, for the benefit not only of the preſent Age, but alſo of Poſterity to the World's end; that (as St. *Peter* ſaith) they might be able, after *the deceaſe of the Apoſtles, to have theſe things always in remembrance.* This was the reaſon given by thoſe inſpired Perſons for their writing. So St. *John*, chap. 20. 30, 31. *Many other ſigns truly* 2 Pet. 1. 15.

Sermon I.

truly did Jesus in the presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book: But these are written, that ye (who read, as well as those that saw and heard) *might believe.*

(5.) When a Revelation was at first thus attested, and afterwards was commited to Writing by Persons divinely inspired, that is then the Word of God, and not the Word of Men, though written by them, as much as it was so when spoken by them. So the same Evangelist; *This is the Disciple who testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony* (whether by Word or Writing) *is true.* So our Apostle requires that they should seriously mind what he wrote, as well as what he taught, *I charge* (ὁρκίζω *adjure*) *you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.* From thence in all Ages hath the Teacher Authority for what he delivers, and the Hearer for what he receives and believes; And therefore our Saviour and the Apostles did remit their Auditors to the Scriptures of the Old Testament (which were written by Divine Inspiration) as the standing Rule, 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. 1 *Cor.* 15. 3, 4. *Search the Scriptures*, John 5. 39. And St. *Paul reasoned out of the Scriptures*, Acts 17. 2, 3.

John 21. 24.

1 Thess. 5. 27.

Luke 24. 27, 44, 45.

(6.) From thence it naturally follows, that if what is taught by Persons not inspired, be either the express Doctrine contained in such divine Writings, or be consonant there-

thereunto; such Doctrine is then to be received not merely as the Word of Men (though spoken and delivered by them) but as it is in truth the Word of God. Sermon I.

All Christians allow the holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, and to be of his immediate Inspiration; and in which he hath made known his Mind and Will to Mankind. All such again generally allow, that there are Teachers appointed by God in Succession, though not immediately Called and Inspired, as the Apostles were; and whose Work and Office it is to expound those Sacred Books, and to instruct the People out of them in all things necessary to their Salvation: And being in the faithful discharge of this their Office, and making the Word of God their Rule, their Doctrine is not theirs, but his that sends them.

What St. *Paul* wrote is of like Authority with what he taught; and what he taught and wrote was *not after Man*, neither *received he it of Man, neither was he taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, as he professeth, *Gal.* 1. 11, 12.

And therefore the Doctrine which he taught was to be accounted, as if Christ himself had been speaking and Writing, and of the like Authority and Obligation: So the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5. 21. *Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ; we pray you in Christ's stead.*

And

Sermon I.

And now in like manner, if what is taught by others authorized thereunto, be consonant to what St. *Paul*, and the rest of the Divine Pen-men wrote, it is to be regarded as if he and they were still in Person the Teachers, or as if Christ himself were speaking by them.

Such a Doctrine may be called Apostolical and Divine, and is to be accounted, not as in appearance the Word of Men, but as it is in truth the Word of God. Upon this account it is our Church receives the three Creeds, *viz.* the *Nice* Creed, *Athanasius*'s, and the *Apostles*; because they may, (as the Article 8. Article expresseth it) be *proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.*

To which we must refer both Auditor and Teacher; and both are equally obliged to make it their Rule: And under that Notion and Character, I shall in the next place consider the Word of God.

2. The Word of God contained in holy Scripture is a Rule for our Direction in matters of the greatest Moment in the World; such as relate to Faith, Worship, Conscience, Practice, Comfort, and Life Eternal. It is Isa. 8. 20. for these we must repair, *To the Law and to* Luke 16. 29. *the Testimony. They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.*

Of these in order.

(1.) The Scripture is a Rule of Faith and Doctrine. Revelation, properly so called, and

and Reason, are of a distinct Order and Consideration: For though such Revelation be agreeable to reason, yet it is not derived from it, not to be discovered by it. Of this kind is the process of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, which is wholly to be resolved into divine Revelation. Thus our Saviour states the Case in the reflection he makes upon *Peter*'s Answer to his Question, *Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God:* Saith he, *Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven*, Mat. 16. 15. Sermon I.

So saith our Apostle in the place before quoted, *The Gospel which was preached by me is not after Man; for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* And therefore in matters of that Nature, we that have no such immediate Revelation, as St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* had, must have recourse to Scripture, and to Scripture alone for our information in all things necessary to Salvation. Thus our Church sums it up, *Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to Salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any Man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite and necessary to Salvation.* Article 6.

When therefore any Point or Doctrine is asserted to be of necessity to be believed, or any

Sermon I.

any Precept is required of neceſſity to be obſerved, in order to Salvation, we may juſtly aſk, Where is it written? Or what Scripture-proof have ye for it? But if that Evidence be wanting, the Doctrine or Precept ſo wanting may, and ought to be rejected with an Anathema, *Gal.* 1. 8, 9. This is the Caſe depending betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, *viz.* Whether Scripture be a ſufficient and the only Rule to direct and oblige us in what relates to our Salvation? The apparent want of which lays them under a neceſſity of expoſing thoſe holy Books as deficient, obſcure, and unintelligible; and of having recourſe to Tradition and Church-Authority for their Defence, becauſe they have no better, and durſt not venture their Cauſe upon the Sacred Writings alone. For if their corrupt Doctrines were to be found in thoſe divine Records, and that the Pope's Supremacy, their Churches infallibility, the Doctrines of Tranſubſtantiation and Purgatory, *&c.* were as legible there as the Birth, Life, Death, the Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of our Saviour, they would doubtleſs have made no farther Appeal, nor have call'd in Traditions for their relief; nor injoyn'd that they ſhould be received, *pari pietatis affectu*, with *the like pious regard as the Holy Scriptures* (as the Council of *Trent* hath determined. *Seſſ.* 4.)

It was certainly a presumptuous and impious attempt of that Church, to annex their Traditionary Doctrines to the *Nicene Creed*, and to make them to be of equal Authority and Necessity to be received: And when after the Recital of the Articles, they conclude, *Hanc esse verum Catholicam Fidem, extra quam nemo salvus esse possit.* Sermon I.

The Form of Profess. prescribed by the Decree of *Pius* IV. according to the Decree of the Council of *Trent*, *Sess.* 24. *Decret. de Reform. c.* 1. *&* 12. **De Pontif. Præf.*

And it is the more presumptuous in them, because many, or most of the learned Defenders of their Church have acknowledged that there is no ground in Scripture for the chief Points that they differ from us in; as the Pope's Supremacy (which * *Bellarmine* saith is *the sum of Christianity*) Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Indulgences, Image-Worship, *&c.*

But in the mean while it is to our advantage and satisfaction, that we have a certain Rule to examine all Principles by, and such a Rule as even our Adversaries must acknowledge to be of Divine Authority: A Rule that is as All-sufficient, as it is the only measure of Apostolical Doctrine necessary to our Salvation.

2. The same is to be said as to Divine Worship, which Scripture is an established Rule for. How necessary it is that there should be a prescribed Rule for this, the various Superstitions and Declensions from the Purity of it doth shew, notwithstanding there is so sufficient and perfect a Rule for the

Sermon I.

the regulation for it; for if it be so where there is such a Provision made, what a corruption would it have been, if all were left to Liberty and human Invention. It is indeed wisely provided in the Gospel-Constitution, that it be not under the restraint of such Particularities as were under the Law injoyned, and were strictly to be observed; but it is on the other hand necessary, for the reason before given, that all the chief Lines, and essential parts of Worship, should be drawn out and particularly described: Such are the Object of it, such the Acknowledgment of the great Mediator, in whose Name all our Praises and Prayers should be offered up to the Father; such the Language in which all the Offices of publick Worship should be performed; such the Ordinance by which we are initiated and admitted into the Christian Church; and again, that in which the great Benefits we are made Partakers of by Christ's Death are commemorated. But if we enquire into the Ways of Worship intruded upon the World, we shall often find such Irregularities as have made the Christian Worship to be quite another thing than is contained in Scripture; such representations of God; such other Objects of Divine Worship proposed, as are wholly irreconcileable to it. The Subject then is large, and I shall therefore confine my self to one instance alone, and that is, the

the Adoration given to the Bleſſed Virgin in the Office of the Church of *Rome*, which that ſo abounds in, that one would think her Name was to be found in every page of the New Teſtament, and that there ſhould be a Goſpel for her, as well as they have made a Pſalter. And what a diſappointment would it be to a Perſon that had been converſant in the Breviary, and other devotional Books of that Church, but meanly ſkill'd or read in the Scriptures, to find ſo little ſaid of her in thoſe holy Writings, that her whole Hiſtory, and all that is ſpoken of her there, will not make up one ſingle Leaf of the Bible. We thankfully own that ſhe was an extraordinary Perſon for Piety and Vertue, or elſe ſhe had never been made choice of to be Mother of our Bleſſed Saviour: *Bleſſed was ſhe among* and above all *Women* in the World, that was ſo *highly favoured*, as to conceive and bring him into the World, *Luke* 1. 28. And ſhe is therefore taken into our Calendar. And yet 'tis very remarkable, that inſtead of thoſe glorious Appellations and Titles given to her in the Offices of the Church of *Rome*, of being *Queen of Heaven*, and * that by *the right of a Mother* *can*

Sermon I.

* *O Felix puerpera*
Noſtra pians Scelera
Jure Matris impera Redemptori.

This is generally omitted in the late Forms, and is denied upon occaſion to be found in them: But as it was undeniably

Sermon I.

can command her Son, and can shew that Mercy to Sinners which he doth not, *&c.* I say, 'tis very remarkable, that instead of that she should be Thrice reprehended by our Saviour, and spoken of by him in no other term of respect than *Woman*, *John* 2. 4. *chap.* 19. 26. And that the Evangelists should use no other than *the Mother of Jesus*, John 2. 1. Acts 1. 14. Is it not worthy our notice, that there is no more said of her in those Books, than that the Angel *Gabriel* was sent to a *Virgin espoused to a Man whose name was* Joseph, *of the House of* David, *and the Virgin's name was* Mary: That he should say, *Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; and blessed art thou among Women.* And *behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son, and call his name Jesus:* That she went upon this to visit her Cousin *Elizabeth*, and both joined together in a divine Hymn, *Luke* 1. 26, &c. That she went to *Bethlehem* with *Joseph*, and was there deliver'd, *Mat.* 2. 11. That *she kept* what was said upon that, and other occasions *in her Heart*, Luke 2. 19. That after the Nativity she was purified according to the Law, and went into *Egypt*,

in the ancient Offices, so it is still retained in some; as in the Hymn *de Planctu B. Mariæ*; in the *Proprium Festorum Ordinis Minorum ad Formam Officii Novi redactam.* Printed at *Paris*, apud *Jacobum Kerwer*, 1583. and annexed to the *Missale Romanum ex Decreto Sti. Concilii Tridentini restitutum. Pii. V. Jussu editum.*

Mat-

Mat. 2. 13. That she went up to *Jerusalem* when he was twelve Years old, *Luke* 2. 22. That when she found our Saviour in the Temple, disputing with the Doctors, she said, *Why hast thou thus done with us*, &c. *And kept these things in her Heart*, Luke 2. 48. That she was with our Saviour at the Wedding in *Canaan*, *John* 2. 4. Went to seek for him at *Capernaum*, *Mat.* 12. 46. And was with him at the Cross, *John* 19. 25. That she should be but once mentioned in the *Acts*, at the Assembly of the 120, *Acts* 1. 14. and not the least notice of her throughout the Epistles.

Sermon I.

It looks as if the Holy Ghost that guided the Sacred Pen-men, did it from a foresight of the great abuse that would in future Ages be put upon the Christian World by the vile Superstition, and gross Idolatry of that Church.

And it shews how necessary it is, that we should keep to the prescribed Rule in the Doctrine and Faith we receive, and the Worship we are to perform to Almighty God, and to assent to what St. *Jerom* saith, *Non credimus quia non legimus.* *Adverſ. Helvidium. Tom.* 2.

3. The Word of God is a Rule of Direction and Conscience. The Apostle saith, That *what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law*, Rom. 3. 19. That *where no Law is, there is no Transgression*, Rom. 4. 15. And that *sin is not im-*

puted when there is no Law, Rom. 5. 13.

Sermon I. So that we are not under an Obligation as to point of Conſcience, when there is no Law; and what the Law requires of us is thereby made our Duty; what the Law forbids, is a Sin; but what the Law neither commands nor forbids, may be done or left undone, as occaſion ſerves; for it is indifferent: It may be a matter of Prudence and Expedience, but not of Conſcience.

1 Cor. 10. 29.

The Law of *Moſes* forbad the uſe of ſeveral Meats, and during that Law the *Jews* under that Miniſtration were obliged in point of Conſcience to obey it; and it was neceſſary, becauſe of the Divine Command.

Rom. 14. 2, 5.

But thoſe things being of a poſitive and arbitrary Nature, when that Law was relaxed or aboliſhed, the Obligation ceaſed, and the Unlawful became Lawful; and every Creature of God, as it was good in it ſelf, and proper for Mankind, ſo was not upon a point of Conſcience to be *refuſed, if it be received with Thankſgiving*.

1 Tim. 4. 3, 4.

In ſuch a caſe it is as with the Law of the Land, which reſtrains the Liberty of the Subject in many inſtances; and whilſt that Law is in force, we are for the preſent as much bound up in Practice and Fact, as if the Matter were in it ſelf unlawful: But the Law being Temporary, and the Matter in it ſelf indifferent, the Legiſlators may, according as they ſee occaſion, forbid what they

they before commanded, and command what they before forbad, revoke what was eſtabliſhed, and then the Subject is at liberty to act or forbear as he pleaſeth. Sermon I.

And thus it is in Religion with all poſitive Laws, which receive their force not from the things themſelves, but from the Authority of the Lawgiver; they do oblige or not oblige, according to the pleaſure and declaration of Almighty God: But if there is no Command nor Prohibition, we may conclude the thing to be indifferent and matter of Liberty. It being true here, which the Apoſtle ſaith in another caſe, *If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* And our Heart cannot reaſonably condemn us, where the Law doth not. So that as to Conſcience, the Law of God is the Rule, and where the Law is not a Rule, 'tis no Matter of Conſcience. Thus the Apoſtle determines it in the caſe of Meats; *Neither if we eat, are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe:* For neither of theſe things do commend us to God, or oblige us. However, I acknowledge that the Goſpel doth often give us general Rules, as to the obſervation of things in their own nature indifferent, and by which even in that matter we are to govern our ſelves. Such are,

1 John 3. 21.

1 Cor. 8. 8.

(1.) The Cuſtoms and Uſages of the Church and Nation, when falling under

Sermon I.

the former Rule, of being neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. When Customs are founded on things in themselves unlawful, they are the more to be opposed, because they are then like a habit of Sin, which makes the Condition so much the worse; but when a Custom is in a Matter of Liberty in it self, the Custom carries some Authority of Age with it, and expects (as it were) an observance: So it was in the case of taking and administring an Oath, which in the time of the Patriarchs was by putting the Hand under the Thigh, *Gen.* 24. 2. *ch.* 47. 29. But afterwards, it was by lifting up the Hand, *Ezek.* 20. 5, 6, 23. *Dan.* 12. 7. *Rev.* 10. 6. Such was the case of Mens being uncover'd in Divine Worship; the Custom among the *Jews* and *Eastern* Nations had been to be cover'd in such Service; but the contrary afterward prevailed in the Christian Church: And the Apostle argues upon it, as from the reasonableness of it, 1 *Cor.* 11. 3. so he thinks fit to end the dispute upon it, *If any be contentious*, and will after all be obstinate and tenacious, let him know *we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God*, ver. 16. He must be of a contentious Spirit, that will in such a case maintain such a singularity.

(2.) Another restraint is Decency, which arises from several Occasions and Cases; as sometimes from divine intimations. Thus

from God's requiring *Moſes* to put off his Shoes, *Exod.* 3. 5. probably came that Cuſtom among the *Jews*, of putting off the Sandals when they enter'd the Temple, *Mat.* 3. 11. and from his putting a Veil upon his Face, *Exod.* 34. 33. probably came the Cuſtom of their being veiled in Divine Worſhip, 2 *Cor.* 3. 7, 13. Sermon I.

It were endleſs to give inſtances of this kind, but the general Rule is always in force, 1 *Cor.* 14. 40. *Let all things be done decently and in order.* In which caſe that is oftentimes decent in one Church or Nation, or Age, which is not ſo in another; and decency being a variable thing, our Practice muſt go along with the publick Practice, which is a Rule ſufficient, and the beſt guide of Conſcience, without farther doubt or ſcruple, as will farther appear.

(3.) Another reſtraint is the Conſcience of others. Conſcience is always a Rule to a Man's ſelf, *and whatſoever is not of Faith is ſin*, Rom. 14. 23. however he may be miſtaken in his opinion. So the Apoſtle determines the point, ver. 14. *I know*, ſaith he, *and am perſuaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of it ſelf: but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* But though a Perſon is thus fully ſatisfied in himſelf, and his ſatisfaction is grounded upon Truth and Reaſon, yet ſince *every Man hath not that* 1 Cor. 8. 7

Sermon I. Ver. 9.

knowledge, he that is thus ſtrong muſt take heed, *leſt by any means this liberty of his becomes a ſtumbling-block to him that is weak*; and he be thereby emboldned to do with offence to his own Conſcience, which the other doth (ſuppoſe) with the allowance of it: As it was in the caſe of Meat offered to Idols, and afterwards expos'd to ſale in the Shambles, or ſet before them at an Entertainment: The Perſons buying or invited were not obliged to aſk any Queſtions about it, but did freely eat, and buy, as if it had not been ſo offered. But though the ſtrong was not conſcious to himſelf of any unlawfulneſs in it, yet if a Perſon weak in the Faith ſhould admoniſh him about it, as a matter in his Opinion unlawful, the other is to ſuſpend, or forbear for the preſent, becauſe he is under no neceſſity, there being a ſufficiency elſewhere: And *the Earth is the Lords, and the fulneſs thereof.* Conſidering therefore the tenderneſs of the ſcrupulous Perſons, and the danger that may follow, the Apoſtle doth with great Judgment and Compaſſion decide the caſe; and concludes the whole, *Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.* When he ſaith, *not to the Church of God*, it directs us to another reſtraint; which is,

1 Cor. 10. 26, 28.

Ver. 32.

(4.) The reſtraint of Authority; for that releaſes us from the former, even

from the yielding to the Conſcience of others, if theſe two are inconſiſtent. Whilſt we are in our own power, Charity and Chriſtian Compaſſion ſhould attend us; and we may then with the Apoſtle, comply with the Infirmity of a Brother to the utmoſt degree. *If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth, leſt I make my brother to offend.* But now where Authority interpoſes and requires, and the Law of the Land or Church injoins, we are not in our own power; and then Obedience to the Church of God, or the Civil Government takes place of a private Conſcience; and we are obliged to ſubmit to the Injunctions of our Superiors, when there is no higher Authority, no divine Command to hold or reſtrain us. As for inſtance; It is a Law amongſt us, that all Perſons receiving the Sacrament ſhould receive it Kneeling, and not otherwiſe. It is the command of God that I ſhould receive, but whether kneeling, ſtanding or ſitting, is, I ſuppoſe, in it ſelf a matter of liberty. But now when the practice of the Church, and the Law of the Land has directed and order'd it otherwiſe, the offence of a private Perſon will neither warrant me wholly to forbear to do what the command of my Saviour requires, nor to receive otherwiſe than the Law injoins, or the common and univerſal practice of the Communion doth.

Sermon I.

1 Cor. 8. 13.

But after all, theſe are reſtraints of our Liberty in operation, but do not alter the nature of the things. For true Chriſtian Liberty conſiſts in our Mind and Judgment, and in a freedom of acting as the caſe ſhall require: And when the reaſons aboveſaid do not interpoſe and reſtrain, we may ſafely, and with a good Conſcience, practice as we pleaſe, act or not act as the

Sermon I.

the occasion serves, and as we shall judge it expedient. This case is extraordinarily well adjusted in St. *Augustin*'s Epistle to *Januarius*, in the account he gives of his Mother *Monica*, who observing the different Custom of eating or not eating on the Saturday, in *Rome* and *Milan*, advised with St. *Ambrose* what she should do, being often at both.

He told her that the Case was indifferent, it was in it self lawful to fast or not fast, and therefore that she might use her liberty; and when she was at *Rome* to fast, and at *Milan* to eat: And so would not she be an Offence to them, nor they to her. St. *Austin* admires the skilfulness of the Resolution, and looks upon it as if it were an Oracle from Heaven.

This is true Christian Liberty, and he that acts according to this Advice, *Stands fast in the liberty wherein Christ hath made us free.* Gal. 5. 1.

I have been the more particular upon this, that I may lay down what I think the most effectual Method for quieting the Minds of Christians; and if we do rightly apply the Apostle's Maxim before quoted, *Where there is no Law, there is no Transgression*; we are at perfect Liberty, to practise as the Church of God practises wherever we are: And though we may perhaps sometimes wish that this or that Article were accommodated more to our liking, yet if it be in a Case not unlawful, the expedience of a quiet Conscience, the expedience of Union among Christians, and Duty of Obedience to Authority is to preponderate and weigh down all other little Prejudices and Dislikes whatever. And he that shall lay those prejudices aside for the sake of these Expediences, will find more ease and satisfaction in himself, than he could do in doubting

doubting or cherishing his doubts, or in forbearing; and much more than in imposing publick Orders or Customs of the Church where he is. Sermon I.

(4.) The Scripture is the Rule of Life and Practice; and being an universal Law, that reaches every Case, Person and State, it requires of all a strict and universal Obedience, without Exception, Restraint, or Favour. So the Apostle, *James* 2. 10. *Whoso shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all:* That is, the Authority of the Law is supported by an obedience to it in all particulars therein required. And he that breaks in upon any branch of it, knowingly and wilfully, attempts the whole, and in the sight of God, and with respect to the Legislative Authority, might with as much allowance, nullify and violate the whole: So that our Obedience is to be intire and universal: And by that we may judge of our sincerity, of the truth of our Obedience, and the safety of our State; for our State cannot be safe without Obedience, nor our Obedience sincere without it be intire. And therefore he that lives in the breach of any one divine Law, that lives in the commission of any known and wilful Sin, or in the constant omission of any known Duty, is in effect a Transgressor of the whole Law; and must needs conclude against himself, if he will judge of his State by that which is the chief and most sensible measure for the trial of it. The having *respect to all the Commandments*, is the best and safest Character to judge by: And if we find upon enquiry, that we live up to this Character, we have laid our Foundation upon a Rock which cannot be shaken. We then approve our selves to our selves, and to God the judge of all. Psal. 119. 6.

Sermon I.

all. So saith the Apostle, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* This brings me to the next particular, *viz.*

1 John 3. 21.

(5.) The Scriptures are a Rule or Direction for our Comfort: So the Apostle, *Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* The case of Mankind, as it stood or stands without a Revelation, is a state full of Perplexity, and altogether uncapable of relief from any thing that can be offer'd by Nature and Reason to prevent or remedy it. Let us consider the Infirmity and Corruption of human Nature, the Terrors of a guilty Mind, the approaches of Death, and the expectation of a future Judgment. Let Nature bring forth its strong Reasons, and make an experiment of its Power; where are the fruits of its Conquest? Where is the Person that hath obtain'd such a Victory over himself, over his Passions and Lusts, his own Strength, so as to have no need of other and better helps to ensure it? Where is the expiation for Sin, or an equivalent that Mankind can rest upon? Where's the Person that can triumph over Death, or that can stand it out in the Judgment? Where's the Person that could quell the Thoughts, and the Fears, and Issue of these by human Wisdom, or by the Principles of Philosophy and Morality? Where are the Gods of *Hamath* and *Arpad?* Where are the Gods of *Sepharvaim*, *Hena* and *Iva*, are they able to deliver Mankind out of the Hands of the *Assyrian*, those great disturbers of the World? Where is that Power that can effectually defeat the Power of Darkness? No! if that be all that ye have to rest upon, we must

Rom. 15. 4.

conclude

conclude in despair, and undergo the sad fate of a *Cain*, an *Achitophel*, a *Judas*. But God be thanked that there is no Malady but what there is a suitable Remedy for; the Scriptures come abundantly furnished with Antidotes, with proper Arguments and Considerations: There we have the promises of Pardon, Peace and Reconciliation of God to the Creature: There God has publickly declar'd, That he *desireth not the death of a sinner*, and that *the blood of his Son cleanseth from all sin.* Sermon I.

Now what a comfort and satisfaction is this to a Person who hath known what it is to have uncontroulable Conflicts within himself; that knew not where to rest, nor what to retire to as long as he carries himself with himself, and is pursued by his own guilty Mind, he is encompass'd with Horror and Confusion.

What a Comfort is it now to be relieved, to have his Soul calm and quiet; that when he betakes himself to Rest, can say with the devout Psalmist, *I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.* When he lies upon a Sick-bed with *Hezekiah*, *Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.* When he is ready to expire, to be able to say with the holy Psalmist, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit, O Lord God of Israel.* And to close his days with the Apostle's saying, *I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*, &c. Whence doth this good Man derive all this? Whence, but from the Word of God that inexhaustible Treasure of Mercy and Goodness? Whence but from the Promises made to the

Isa. 38. 3.

Psal. 31. 5.

2 Tim. 4. 7.

Sermon I.

the Penitent? Whence but from his Saviour, from his Atonement and Intercession? Now I would propose it to any Man living, to shew the like example, from whatever other Considerations may be offer'd and found out. Compare a true Christian with an Infidel that questions or denies all this, and see how the ballance will turn, or which part any one would take: Whether this that is left to himself, and has but self-created Comforts to support him; or he that fetches his from those Wells of Salvation; that rich Treasure of Peace and Comfort which doth support him in any condition.

It must needs be, that every Person that is upon inquiry and at a loss, is so far miserable, that cries out, *O wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* And that Person happy, who can with chearfulness say, *Thanks be to God which giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord.*

(6.) The Scriptures are to be the Rule of Judgment: For as God will judge according to Truth, and will then *render to every man according to his deeds*, so those Deeds will be judged of according to the Gospel. Thus our Saviour declares, *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

Rom. 2. 16.

John 12. 48.

And if Judgment be the last Act, from which there is no appeal, and upon it Men are irreversibly determined to Happiness or Misery, it doth above all things concern them to discern and keep up to that which shall be the final Rule of Judgment, and by which they shall then be sentenced.

And if this be so, and that the Scripture is such a Rule, then by this Men will be enabled to judge of their State now, and to foretel, without

out the Spirit of Prophecy, what will be the Iſſue, what their Doom at that day.

Sermon I.

It is a Queſtion of the greateſt importance, a Caſe which certainly above all we ſhould ſeek for ſatisfaction in, *viz.* What will become of me in the other World? And how ſhall I be able to ſtand in the Judgment? Whether I ſhall be amongſt the Sheep or the Goats, and be determined to the Right Hand or Left of our Saviour; to Salvation or Damnation?

But as important as the Queſtion is, it is not difficult to reſolve, if we repair to the Rule, and judge of our Actions and State by it; for ſuch as the one is, ſuch ſhall the other be: The Rule whereby we are to be judged hereafter, is the ſame by which we may judge of our State here; and ſuch as our State is here, ſuch ſhall it be then. There we ſhall ſoon find what the Terms are upon which the Proceedings of that day will turn; and then how neceſſary is it to be well acquainted therewith.

IId. General; which is

The manner and way that the *Theſſalonians* received the Word in; which was, as it was the Word of God, and not merely the Word of Men. This is literally true of the Scripture, that it is the Word of God, or a Divine Revelation; and this is reducibly ſo of all Doctrines contained therein: And ſo far as thoſe Doctrines are conſonant to the Scripture, they be called the Word of God.

And whatever bears upon it that Title, and is the Word of God, and brings with it a ſufficient Evidence and Proof of its ſo being, comes with Authority, and the higheſt Authority in the World: For what can more oblige us to Reverence, Attention, and Obſervance, than what God himſelf teaches and requires.

1. It is, I ſay, to be received with Reverence, with

Sermon I.

with Seriousness and Consideration. It is so to be received as to the Matter and Subject of it, which is of the greatest Importance and Concernment to us, of no less Concernment than our Eternal Salvation, and that enforced by the dignity of it; when it is, as it were, God speaking to us. And this is an Argument the Apostle makes use of, *Heb.* 12. 25. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him* [Moses] *that spoke on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven.* And then how ought *we* (as the Apostle proceeds) *to serve God with reverence and godly fear:* With what seriousness and devotion should we hear or read the Divine Oracles? If this were well consider'd, that we in all our Services consider'd that we are in the Presence of God, and have him dictating to us, and instructing us, how would it affect us?

2. The Word of God is to be received with Attention. There is (as I have said) that Authority in it that commands our regard, and if it fails in it, it must proceed from Infidelity, Carelessness, or gross Stupidity. But surely if any thing can prevail upon Men, and bring them as it were to themselves, it must be a consideration, and a consideration grounded upon such Authority as this before us is; it must be Attention that must affect them, and it must be the nature and weight of the Argument that must bring Men to attend: And without this all is lost upon them.

3. The Word of God is to be received with Observance, and the putting in practice the Doctrines and Instructions we receive: And that is the issue of all, That we be *doers of the word, and not hearers only*, lest we *deceive our selves*, James 1. 22. *Of*

Of Justification by Faith.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

CLERGY,

In the Parish Church of

ALL-SAINTS in CHICHESTER,

October 7. 1702.

By the Right Reverend

JOHN Lord Bishop of *CHICHESTER.*

LONDON,

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Sermon II.

ROM. V. 1.

Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

JUSTIFICATION by Faith is, by One of the first in the Reformation in Foreign Parts, said to be, *Articulus stantis & cadentis Ecclesiæ*, a Point on which the Foundation of the Christian Religion doth subsist. And being of such Consequence in it self, as we must needs own it to be, not for his saying so much (though that is well enough expressed) as for that it is grounded on Scripture, it is of great Use to have a right Notion of it. And it is for that reason that I have at this time made choice of this Subject, which our Apostle in his other Epistles, but more especially in this, doth so much insist and enlarge upon.

In discoursing upon which the Apostle considers Mankind under a Threefold Character, as *Gentiles*, *Jews*, and *Christians*.

The First of these he discourses upon in the First Chapter, and describes their State, which in the Conclusion appears to be very deplorable.

Sermon II.

The Second State, though much more excellent than the First, having a Revelation, which they had not, yet was very defective, and even under that Dispensation there needed a Reformation.

So that the Apostle infers in the Third Chapter, that both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were *all under Sin*; and *all the world was guilty before God*, ver. 19.

What then is to be done?

There remains therefore the Evangelical State, which is by way of Remedy: This the Apostle calls *a Righteousness without the Law*, chap. 3. 21, 22. but which (he saith) was *manifested by the Law and the Prophets, even the Righteousness of God which is by Faith of Jesus Christ.* And of this he gives an Instance, *chap.* 4. in *Abraham*, who lived before the Law given to the *Jews*, and consequently could not be justified by it: And yet *Abraham* was justified, and had a Faith which was *imputed to him for righteousness*, ver. 20, 21, 22.

From hence the Apostle proceeds to the Application of this History, *ver.* 23, 24, 25.

Now, saith he, *it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our*

our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our Justification. Sermon II.

From all which he infers in the Text, *Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In which Words there is,

I. The State we are brought into, signified in the Term *justified.*

II. The Condition upon which we are justified, and that is Faith: *Being justified by Faith.*

III. The Privilege consequent upon our Justification, and that is, *Peace with God.*

IV. The Means by which this Grace and Favour is conferred upon us, that such a Covenant is made, and such Conditions are offered, and such a Privilege is annexed to it; and that is *through Christ. Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I shall observe this Order, in the farther Prosecution of this Argument.

I. I shall consider the State we are admitted into, and that is, That we are *justified.*

To justify is a Forinsecal or Law-Term, and is no other than to clear, acquit, and discharge by some solemn Act and Declaration. So *Deut.* 25. 1. *If there be a con-*

Sermon II.

troversy between men, and they come into judgment, that the Judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous: That is, if a Person appears upon a due and impartial hearing, to be innocent of the Fact he is taxed with, he shall forthwith be acquitted.

So that to justify, implies that a Person is impleaded, and has an Accusation brought against him, and that upon his Trial being found not guilty, he is juridically and finally discharged.

And this may respect a Threefold Case.

1. It respects the Case of a Person, that upon a Charge and Allegation against him, after a full Tryal and Examination has been found innocent, and by the Sentence of the Court has been thereupon acquitted.

But this is a Case that belongs not to us, it's a Plea none can make or insist upon, with respect to God, as our Apostle had shewed, *chap.* 1. 2, 3. Where he had *proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under Sin*, and *all the world to be guilty before God*; as he saith, *chap.* 3. from *ver.* 9. to *v.* 23.

2. Another Case is, when the Delinquent has upon due Examination been found guilty, but by some after-Acts

doth make such sufficient Amends and Reparation for his former Miscarriages, and thereby deserves so well of his Prince and Country, that it would be a manifest Piece of Injustice to impute his former Faults to him, and punish him for them. This is the Case of Merit. So the Apostle, *chap.* 4. 4. *To him that worketh* [so as to Merit,] *is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* Sermon II.

This again belongs not to us; for all *boasting* is here *excluded*, *chap.* 3. 27. For if Man could not merit when he was Innocent, and neither retaliate what he had received, nor claim Eternal Life upon the virtue of any Performances of his; then how can he be supposed to merit, when he has been found Guilty, and justly forfeited the Favour he before received?

3. Another Case is, when a Delinquent is found Guilty, but upon an Act of Indemnity and Oblivion tender'd by the Prince to such as are within the Terms of it, and upon pleading such an Act of Grace, he is discharg'd.

And this is our Case; When we that were before Criminals, and so fell under the Sentence of Death and Condemnation, were by the special Grace and Favour of God taken into a new Covenant; and

Sermon II. without any pretence to Innocency on the one hand, or to Merit on the other, were justified and received into Favour. So our Apostle, *chap.* 4. 5. *To him that worketh not,* [by way of Merit,] *but believeth on him that justifieth* [those that were once] *the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness:* That is, is so accounted, that it shall be accepted as if it was a Righteousness originally and completely Perfect; and he shall be as fully Justified, as if he had been wholly Innocent.

So that Justification in the Gospel Sence, is not with respect to the Innocency or Merit of the Person, as if he was clear of all Fault, or deserved not to be punished; but that though Guilty, and liable to the Penalty, there is Mercy allowed, and offer'd; upon a claim to which, and the fulfilling of the Terms therein appointed, he is by a Rule of Court, as it were, acquitted. As a Criminal has a Right to the Mercy and Favour of the Bench, that produces a Pardon, or pleads an Act of Indemnity, and upon such a Plea is in Equity to be discharged, and no longer to be detained, and no more to be punished, than if he had never offended.

Such are then *justified from all things* that might heretofore have justly been alledged against them. Sermon II.

They are therefore then said to be *washed* and to be *righteous*; and have a Claim and a Right to all the Privileges of that State. (As I shall presently shew.) Acts 13.39. 1 Cor. 6.11. 1 John 3.7.

But this Justification is not so of Grace, as to be without any Condition on our Part. The Apostle doth cautiously prevent any such Surmise and Misconstruction, by what he here saith, *being justified by Faith.* To grant an Act of Oblivion, belongs to God the Governor; to Justify belongs also to him, and both are free Acts of His; (as I shall shew.)

But the Condition, though appointed by God, belongs to us, and what we are to perform, it is by Faith. He it is that justifies us upon our Faith: Which is the next thing to be Consider'd.

II. Here is the Condition upon which we are Justified, and that is *Faith.* We are sometimes in Scripture said to be Justified by *the Grace of God* and by *the Blood of Jesus*, as we are here said to be Justified by Faith; but all conspiring to complete the Sence.

(1.) For when we are said to be Justified *freely by the Grace of God*, Rom. 3. 24. it is as that was the impulsive Cause moving

Sermon II.

ving him thereunto; it being purely of his Grace that Almighty God offers us Terms of Peace and Reconciliation, antecedent to any Acts of ours. So our Apostle, *Rom.* 4. 6. *David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works*, that is, without any Consideration of what was done, or could be done on our Part to procure it.

Titus 3. 5.

And accordingly, the Gospel-Covenant is here called the *free gift*, ver. 15, 16.

Chap. 8. 33. Chap. 3. 26.

In which Sence, it is God, and God alone, that Justifies, and so he is called the *Justifier*.

(2.) We are said to be Justified *by the Blood of Christ*. So it is here said, *ver.* 9. that is, as the Death and Sufferings of Christ were the procuring and meritorious Cause of our Justification; and by Virtue of which, he is said to have *purged us from our sins*, and we are said to be *washed from our sins in his blood*, Rev. 1. 5.

Heb. 1. 3. ch. 9. 14.

In which Sence it is Christ, and he alone, that Justifies. So our Apostle, *ver.* 18. *By the Righteousness of one* [that is Christ] *the free gift* [of Pardon and Reconciliation, *ver.* 10.] *came upon all men unto justification of life*. By Him alone, and by no other, are we thus Justified. Thus doth the 11*th* Article of our Church describe it. *viz.* "We are accounted

"Righteous,

" Righteous, only for the Merit of our
" Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; by Sermon
" Faith, and not by our own Works and II.
" Deservings. Wherefore that we are Ju-
" stified by Faith only is a most whole-
" some Doctrine, and very full of Com-
" fort; as it is more largely expressed in
" the Homilies.

(3.) We are justified by *Faith*; so in the Text: That is, as Faith in Christ is the Condition upon which we are justified; and is so necessary a Condition, that without it we cannot be justified.

In which Sence it is Faith alone that justifies, as our Article saith.

So that we are said to be justified by each of these; that is, by the Grace of God, by the Blood of Christ, and by Faith: By the Grace of God, as the Impulsive and Moving Cause; by the Blood of Jesus, as the Meritorious Cause; and by Faith, as the Condition: And we are justified by each of these alone; that is, there is no other Impulsive Cause but the Grace of God; no other Meritorious Cause, but the Blood of Christ; and no other Condition, but Faith.

All which do amount to thus much, That Almighty God of his mere Grace and Favour did send his Son to dye as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind;

kind; and upon our Faith in him, doth for his sake justify us, and deal with us as if we never had offended. So our Apostle, ver. 10. *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* And chap. 4. 5. *To him that believeth, &c. his Faith is counted for righteousness.*

Sermon II.

And since all this in the Conclusion doth depend upon our Faith, it remains to take that into our Consideration, that we may have a right Notion and Understanding of it.

'Tis said here, *being justified by Faith*; by which we are to understand, not a mere Notional Faith (for that is no other than an Assent to the Truth of what is revealed) but a Faith in operation, a Faith active and vigorous, and that doth comprehend in it all that Duty and those Graces, which elsewhere in Scripture are made the Condition of the Gospel-Covenant, and which give us a Title to all the Privileges of it, such as Forgiveness of Sin, Adoption and Glorification: And that is a Practical Faith, and to which Repentance, Obedience, and Perseverance do belong, as the essential parts of it. When I say, that the Faith which justifies is supposed to include in it such Conditions, and as necessarily to be so understood, as if particularly expressed, it is agreeable to Scripture-

ture-Order, where it is customary,

(1.) To understand Notional Points and Phrases in a Practical Sense. As when Life Eternal is promised to the Knowledge of God, *John* 17. 3. *This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* That Knowledge is not there supposed to be alone; but as accompanied with the Love of God, and Obedience to him, *&c.* And since Faith alone can no more *save*, than Knowledge alone can; when the like Blessings are promised to Faith that are to Knowledge, it must be understood with the same Provisoes, and in a Complex and Practical Sence. In like manner, Sermon II. James 2. 14.

(2.) Where there is a Connexion of Graces, and Duties, and Acts, all concurring to the same end, it is usual in Scripture to put any one for the whole of that kind; and all are there supposed to be present and mutually concurring. As it is in Repentance, of which Confession to God is but one Branch; and yet being an essential and necessary part of that *godly sorrow which worketh repentance*, the Apostle puts it for the whole: 1 *John* 1. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, &c.

And thus it is in the Case before us; because Faith is a necessary Condition of

the

Sermon II.

the Gospel-Covenant, and the first Principle of all Spiritual Life and Operation in us, we are therefore said to be justified and saved by it: Not as if that alone, exclusive of all other Graces and Duties, did justify and save, without Repentance, Regeneration, and new Obedience, without the Love of God, and other Christian Graces; but supposing them as equally necessary to our Acceptance.

Thus the *Publican* is said to be *justified* upon his Repentance, *Luke* 18. 14. And a New Creature avails to the same purpose as Faith. For when the Apostle had said, *Gal.* 5. 6. *Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by love:* In the next Chapter he saith, *Gal.* 6. 15. *Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncirsion, but a new creature*; thereby intimating, that Faith and Regeneration are the same, or rather are necessarily required and conjoined to the same Effect; so that where the one is, there the other also is.

And thus it is also in Faith and Works: For as our Apostle here saith, we are justified by Faith, so he saith *the doers of the Law shall be justified*, Rom. 2. 13.

And St. *James* expressly saith, That *Abraham* was justified *by Works*, Jam. 2. 21.

And,

And, which is remarkable, appeals for the Proof of this, to the very same Scripture-Quotation of *Gen.* 15. 5, 6. which St. *Paul* produces for his Assertion, that we are justified by Faith, *Rom.* 4. 3, 22. Sermon II.

For thus St. *James* argues, *Was not Abraham our father justified by Works, when he had offered his son Isaac upon the Altar*, &c.? And it follows, *The Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness*, ver. 23.

Now how could the Two Apostles quote the same Scripture, the one for a Justification by Faith, and the other for a Justification by Works, if the Faith in one were not the same as Works in the other? Nay, how could St. *James* prove his Assertion, That *Abraham* was justified by Works, from a Quotation, that *his Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness*, if his Faith and Works were not the same? And that is no other than a Practical, an Obediential Faith.

Such a Faith as *Abraham*'s was, who *staggered not at the Promise*. Such a Faith as *Abraham*'s was, when at God's Command he offered his Son *Isaac* upon the Altar. And thus St. *James* proposes him as an Example, *ver.* 22. *Seest thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and*

Sermon II.

and by Works was Faith made perfect: And *therein*, saith he, *the Scripture was fulfilled.* If we take this Key, and thus understand it, that Apostle's way of Arguing is Clear and Natural, and home to the purpose he produces it for. So he divinely infers, as the sum of all, *ver.* 24. *Ye see then how that by Works a man is justified, and not by Faith only*; that is, We are Justified by both, both concurring to the same end.

And therefore what the Scripture doth thus joyn together, we are not to sunder; lest we pervert the Order and the Sence of it.

We find in Scripture, That by the word *Soul* is often understood the Person, consisting of Body and Soul. Thus the Souls that went down into *Egypt* are said to be sixty six.

Gen. 46. 26.

We find (as aforesaid) that Confession is taken for Repentance.

But now how absurd would it be to conclude from hence, That the Souls of *Jacob*'s Family went down into *Egypt* without their Bodies? Or that if we only confess our Sins to God, though we forsake them not, they shall be forgiven; and by Virtue of that Confession alone we shall be Accepted and Pardoned.

And

And as absurd is it to think, when we are said to be Justified by Faith, that Evangelical Obedience is thereby excluded, without which *Faith is dead*, saith St. *James*. Sermon II. James 2. 20, 26.

To conclude this, we see what a strict connexion there is between all the Graces and Duties, and I may add, the Privileges of the Gospel, which make up the whole of that Covenant, as to us, betwixt God and Man. And this Chain is admirably represented by our Apostle, *Whom he called, them he also Justified, and whom he Justified, them he also Glorified*; (for so I understand it.) Ch. 8. 30.

And consequently, upon the same Terms they shall be glorified hereafter, upon the same they are Justified now: And if they are not Glorified upon any other Terms than Faith, Repentance, and Obedience, they are not Justified upon any other.

For if a Person might be Justified upon any other Terms, than those are which he shall be glorified upon, then he may (contrary to our Apostle's arguing) be Justified, and yet not be Glorified. But if he that is Justified, shall be Glorified, (as our Apostle assures us) then what is necessary to Glorification is also necessary to Justification: And consequently, if the

Sermon II. Faith that Glorifies be not a Solitary Faith, but inclusive of Obedience, then the Faith that Justifies is of the same kind; and a Man can be Justified no more than he can be Saved, without a Faith working by Love, and an Obedience suitable to our Faith.

Having thus far consider'd the nature of that Faith, which our Justification depends upon, I shall in the Third Place proceed to the

III. Consideration, Of the Privilege of that State, which is *Peace with God.*

And that implies,

Pardon for what is past; an Acceptance of our Persons and Services for the time to come, and a Reward consequent upon it.

(1.) Pardon for what is past.

Being Justified by Faith; that is, having performed those Conditions which the Gospel requires, we have Peace with God, all ground of Difference is removed. We are then, by Virtue of the Atonement made by Christ, in a State of Reconciliation; and notwithstanding all the Threatnings denounced against Sinners, and which belonged to us whilst in a State of Unbelief, Impenitence, and Disobedience, we are as secure, as if there never had been any such Threatnings, nor we had ever

ever been obnoxious to them. For where the Gospel Qualifications are found, such as Faith and Repentance, we are as fully Justified and Acquitted as if we had never Offended, but had inviolably kept the whole Law of unerring and perfect Obedience; and may with as much assurance plead the Promise of God in our own Favour, for the Remission of our Sins, and for a Title to Everlasting Life and Salvation, as *Adam* might have pleaded a Right to Life upon the Promise, if he had never fallen, but continued stedfast in his Original State. Sermon II.

For Repentance is to us, what Innocence was to him, and places us in the same Circumstances of Favour. So that now it is not the Nature, the Number, or the Kind of Sins past, nor the Aggravations they may be attended with, that debar us, and render us uncapable of the Divine Mercy; but it is the rejecting of the Terms offer'd, our Unbelief, and final Impenitence, that do exclude us. We are now *justified from all things:* And *there is now no condemnation*, Rom. 8. 1. Acts 13. 39.

And is not this an unspeakable Privilege? For what is a Sinner, but one that has God for his Enemy, that stands obnoxious to the Displeasure of an Almighty Power? What is a Sinner, but one that

Sermon II.

has the Law against him, and by the just Sentence of which he stands convicted, and condemned to receive the Wages of Sin, which is Death? What is a Sinner, but one that has the whole Creation against him? The Flood swept away the Ungodly. The Fire from Heaven consumed a wicked *Sodom.* And it is the Creature as armed in the Cause of their Creator. What is a Sinner, but one that hath his own self for his Enemy, and the Terrors of his own guilty Mind to conflict with? What is a Sinner, but the most miserable of all Creatures?

Ask but the Sinner himself, when he is from under the Power of Temptation, when his Blood is cool, when he is alone, and hath a Heart to consider. Ask him when under the Pressure of Affliction, when confined to his Bed or his Chamber by a painful or wasting Disease, and by that taken off from all the Diversions of the World, and that perhaps his Body as well as his Mind pay the Price of his Extravagances.

Ask him again, when he is upon the Confines of Death, and he is taking his last Farewel of all his Pleasures and Sensual Gratifications; when his Pomp and his Wealth, and the dearest Enjoyments of Life are upon the point of expiring with himself:

himself: When there is nothing left him, nothing to pass with him over the Gulph, but the Terrors of a guilty Mind, the sad Presages of what he is to expect as the Wages of all in another State. Sermon II.

Ask again that miserable Wretch (if he were to be consulted) when he left behind him his Plenty and his Five dissolute Brethren, *Luke* 16. 24. when he wanted a Drop of Water to cool his inflamed Tongue.

Ask any of these, If the Guilt and Punishment of Sin be not a Burden insupportable; and consequently, the Forgiveness of it the greatest Privilege that can be tendered to, hoped for, or enjoyed by Mankind.

Nay, if the Sinner be resolved to run the Venture, and is not to be instructed or persuaded by the dear-bought Experience of such that have gone before him in that unhappy Course; it is but a little while, when he will be taught by his own, what it is to want a Pardon, when he is to seek it, and perhaps seeks it too late to find it: When he will find the Door to be shut, and Mercy inexorable to all his importunate Intreaties; and he like the Five Foolish Creatures in the Gospel, shall be answer'd with a *Verily, I know ye not.* Matth. 25. 12.

Sermon II.

And yet as great a Privilege as this is, 'tis what every Sinner is invited to accept of; 'tis what every Sinner in this World hath the Promise of, if qualified for it by Faith in Christ, and Repentance from dead Works. He will then be justified, he shall be pardoned.

This is given as the Sum of the Gospel, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*, 2 Cor. 5. 19.

2. The next Branch of the Privilege belonging to a Justified State, and included in the Phrase, *Peace with God*, is, Acceptance of our Persons, called in Scripture *Adoption*, which gives us the Title of Children. So our Apostle, *chap.* 8. 15. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*

A Title that sets us in the neareſt Relation unto God, and gives us the sureſt Title to his Favour. A Consideration that begets in us a blessed Tranquillity of Mind, a secure Dependence upon him, an entire Resignation of our selves to his disposal, a patient expectation of Events; and quiets and establishes the Heart under all Difficulties whatsoever.

For

For what of Kindness, Tenderness, and Compassion, what of Beneficence and Favour is there not comprehended in so near a Relation? The Apostle St. *John* wants words to express it: *Behold*, saith he, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! ——Beloved, now we are the sons of God*, 1 John 3. 1, 2. See how our Saviour improves it, *Matth. 7. 9. What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* And accordingly he hath taught us, when we pray, to say, *Our Father which art in heaven:* Which is the ground of an humble Assurance in our selves, and of a sincere Confidence and Trust in him; that like an Indulgent Father he will pity our Infirmities, pardon our Sins upon our Repentance, and in all things act suitably to the Relation we stand in to him, and to the Circumstances in which we are. So the *Psalmist* represents it; *Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: For he knoweth our frame*, Psal. 103. 13, 14. Sermon II.

I may add,

Sermon II. 3. *Peace with God* implies the gracious Acceptance of our Services, when springing from a good Intention and a sincere Mind, notwithstanding the many Imperfections which may, and more or less do necessarily attend them. Especially if it be consider'd, that they are presented through the Intercession of a prevailing Advocate, Christ Jesus, who by his Acceptance of them, and upon his Mediation, makes them as it were his own; and though imperfect in themselves, yet for his sake they are esteemed as if they were perfect. They are then estimated not according to their proper and inherent Value, (for what proportion can there be between Infinite and Finite, Perfect and Defective?) but, if I may so speak, according to the Image and Superscription they bear; as they are the Performances of Obedient Children, and are presented, (as I have said) by our High Priest, *who is holy and undefiled*, and *who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

Heb. 7. 26. ch. 8. 1.

I observe farther,

4. That in this Phrase *Peace with God*, there is implied a mutual Reconciliation; and that upon our Reconciliation to Him, through Christ, he as a mark of his Re-

conciliation

conciliation to us, gives us his Holy Spirit. So our Apostle, after he had said that we *have access by Faith into this Grace, wherein we stand*; in consequence of that he saith, *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* So Galat. 4. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father:* The Spirit of God being the Divine Power which doth bring our Spirits into a due Conformity to it self. Sermon II. ver. 2. 5.

And yet as if this were not sufficient, our Apostle carries the Argument farther, *ver.* 9, 10. *Being Justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

After all, we may observe how cautiously the Apostle doth express himself; for after he had proposed *Abraham* as an instance of one Justified by Faith, he farther explains himself; that so we might not mistake, and think that it was for the sake of Faith alone, and of Faith at large, that we are Justified; but as our Faith has relation to Christ, to Him as the Object of it, and to Him as the Means

Sermon II.

Means by whom that Favour was procured. So in the Text, *Therefore being Justified by Faith we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by Faith into his Grace wherein we stand.*

It is through him that the Favour of Almighty God is conveyed to us. Are we justified *freely by his Grace?* It is *through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, Rom. 3. 24.

Is Peace made for us? It is *by the Blood of his Cross* that he *reconciled all things to himself*, Col. 1. 20.

Have we Forgiveness of Sins? It is *through his Blood*, Ephes. 1. 7.

Are we *adopted* to be his Children? It is *by Jesus Christ*, Ephes. 1. 5.

Do we offer up *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God?* It is *by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. 2. 5.

Are we *made strong?* It is *in the Lord, and in the power of his Might*, Ephes. 6. 10.

Is God said to save us *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost?* It is, as 'tis *shed on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. 3. 5, 6.

Is Eternal Life *the Gift of God?* It is *through Jesus Christ*, Rom. 6. 23.

In

In short, we are said to be Pardoned, to be Justified, to be Accepted, to be Sanctified, to be Saved by him. Sermon II.

So that from the beginning to the end of the Gospel, through the whole Contexture and Frame of it, Christ is interwoven, it is all done by him, or through him, or of him. By him the Grace, and Favour, and Gifts of God descend upon us; and by him again all that we do is sanctified, accepted, and rewarded.

After this manner speaks our Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 1. 30, 31. *Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

There is then no Religion without Christ; *for other Foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. 3. 11: And no Favour or Salvation is there to be obtain'd, but through him, Acts 4. 11, 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*

If it should be enquired whence all this proceeds, that there is such a Scheme or Order laid down, and that through all the parts of it Christ is thus essential to it, thus interwoven with it?

I an-

Sermon II.

I answer, It is partly with respect to Christ himself, partly with respect to us.

With respect to himself; and that the Apostle doth with great Emphasis describe, *Phil.* 2. 6, *&c.* That *being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,* &c. *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* That is that upon these two Acts of Debasement, in taking upon him *the form of a Servant*, and becoming *obedient unto the death of the Cross*, he was exalted by God to this Supreme Authority.

But this, though a Reason as to himself and his Exaltation, yet hath not that immediate respect to us, unless we take in the Reason of his Sufferings; and that, besides the intimation in this place, our Apostle elsewhere abundantly supplies, and particularly, 2 *Cor.* 5. 21. *He* [God] *hath made him* [Christ] *to be sin* [or Sin-Offering]

Offering] *for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:* That is, that we might be pardoned by virtue of the Atonement he made; and we for his sake might be accepted, and our imperfect Services rewarded, as if we were righteous, and they were perfect. Sermon II.

Now then, since it is manifest from the whole, that God would not pardon Sin without a Propitiation, nor accept our Services without a Mediator, it gives the Reason why He, who is both, should be thus dignified by the Father, and why this Article is so often inserted in Scripture, and made the Basis of our Religion, and made an essential Article for us to believe.

And especially doth the Apostle very pertinently introduce it in the Text, when having said, *being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God*, he immediately adds, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*; lest our Faith should be thought to be the Reason, as it is the Condition of our Justification.

No, it is He and He only, *who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*, and in him alone.

Sermon II. From all which we may observe, That as the Love of God in Christ is the great Subject of the Holy Scriptures; so it shews what is to be the chief Subject of our Thoughts as Christians; and of our Discourses and Instructions as we are the *Ministers of Christ*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. That we *preach Christ crucified*, as *the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.* And this not only in contradiction to those that oppose it now, as the *Jews* and *Greeks* heretofore did, to one of whom it was a *stumbling-block*, and to the other *foolishness*; but also and more especially, as it is the sole ground of our Peace and Comfort. Our Apostle could not reflect upon it without a Transport of Satisfaction; he was, as it were, in an Extasy upon the Contemplation of it: *We rejoice*, saith he, *we glory,—we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.*

1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.

Rom. 5. 2, 3, 11.

By which there is such ample Provision made for the Quiet of our Minds, as will answer all the Exigences, scatter all the Fears that the Minds of poor Sinners are entangled with.

What are the Causes from whence all these Miseries do spring? From whence do they arise? but from the Corruption of their Nature, the Power of Temptations,

tions, the Terrors of their own Consciences, the Imperfections of their Services, the Natural Fears of Death, and the Dread of a Future Judgment; each of which carries Despair along with it, if we have nothing to have recourse to, but Nature and Human Conduct. Sermon II.

But now through Jesus Christ we are in all these *more than Conquerors*; by whom, instead of the Complaints of *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!* we can triumphantly say, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. 7. 24, 25.

And into what can all this be resolved, but into the Favour and Grace of God through Christ? since it is all this while upon such a Condition, as by no means can enter into the Consideration; for it is no other than Faith, by which we are here said to be justified.

But after all, who can think of being Justified and Saved for a worthless and ineffectual Faith; a Faith that Men might have been as Good without as with it; *a Faith of Devils*, that with their Faith continue to be Devils still? Jam. 2. 19.

Can we suppose this to have been the Faith of *Abraham*, or would he upon the account of such a Faith have been stiled *the Father of us all?* And would it have been said by our Apostle, *It was not written* Rom. 4. 16.

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Sermon II.

ten for his sake alone, that it was imputed unto him, but for us also? Or rather, would it have been written at all, if he had not shewed the Power of his Faith by as powerful Works? Or can we think we are Imitators of him, if we *stagger* in our Obedience, how firm soever we would be thought to be in our Faith?

No, it must be an operative and an effectual Faith, a Faith that purifies the Heart, and governs the Life; that carries through all the difficulties of this our Pilgrimage here, and that makes us to aspire after and fits us for a Glory that is to come.

Such a Faith intitles us to the Promises of God, and to all the Privileges of the New Covenant; for saith our Apostle, *Being Justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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SERMON

Preach'd before the

KING

AT

St. *JAMES*'s,

Wednesday in Passion-Week.

MARCH 20. 169$\frac{4}{5}$.

By the Reverend JOHN WILLIAMS, D.D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

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2 Cor. V. 21.

For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him.

IN the 19th verſe, we have as it were the Sum of the Goſpel, viz. That *God was in Chriſt reconciling the World to himſelf, not imputing their Treſpaſs unto them*, &c.

2. The uſe to be made of it, that we be therefore reconciled unto God. *Now then we are Ambaſſadors from Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead be ye reconciled to God.*

3. The Argument to enforce it, in the Text, *For he hath made him to be Sin*, &c. In which there are two Phraſes to be explain'd.

1. *He was made Sin.*

For the Explication of which Phraſe we muſt have recourſe to the Old Teſta-

ment, where we may obſerve that the Hebrew Word חַטָּאת ſignifies both *Sin* and *a Sin-offering*, and accordingly the word *Sin* is ſupplied in our Tranſlation by the Addition of *Offering*. So in *Lev.* 4. it is uſed eight times; as ver. 3. *If the Prieſt ſin, let him bring for his Sin a young Bullock unto the Lord for a Sin-Offering.* The word *Sin* ſtands alone in the Hebrew; but our Tranſlation aptly ſupplies it *Sin-Offering*: And which it gives Notice of by putting the word *Offering* in a different Character or Letter from the word *Sin*. So it is c. 5 and 7. Thus it is to be underſtood, and ſhould alſo be rendred, *Hoſea* 4. 8. *They eat up the Sin of my People*, the *Sin*, that is the *Sin-Offering*.

Sermon III.

So *Ezek.* 4. 22, 23. *Iſai* 53. 13. After this manner is it in the New Teſtament. So *Rom.* 8. 3. God ſending his own Son *for Sin*, condemned Sin in the Fleſh, *for Sin*, *i. e.* by *a Sacrifice for Sin*, as it is well rendred in the Margin.

So *Heb.* 9. 26. Chriſt was once offered to bear the Sins of many, and unto them that look for him ſhall he appear the ſecond time *without Sin*, that is without a Sin-offering.

And

And thus it is to be understood in the Text, he was made *Sin for us*, that is a Sin-Offering, or a Sacrifice for Sin. Sermon III.

That we might be made the righteousness of God, that is, that we for Christ's Sake, and upon the terms of the Gospel may be accepted and dealt with by Almighty God, as if we were perfectly righteous.

So is the Phrase used, *Rom.* 10. *They* (the Jews) *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Ignorant of God's righteousness*, that is of the way by which God justifies and saves Men under the Gospel (which is a way of Grace and Favour) *would establish* in the stead of it a Righteousness of their own, of their own choosing, a Justification by the Law of *Moses*, (as he farther explains himself, *ver.* 59.) So *Phil.* 3. 9. So that the meaning of the whole is, that God did graciously appoint, and Christ was pleased freely to become a Sacrifice for our Sins, and for our Sakes to be treated as an Offender, when without any Sin of his own, that we though guilty, might be pardoned, accepted and justified upon the Faith and Repentance.

Sermon III.

He was thus made Sin for us, &c. In treating upon which words I ſhall ſhew.

1. What Chriſt did when he was made Sin for us.

2. What there was in his being made Sin for us, that could be the Reaſon of making us Righteous: For that is here affirmed, he was made Sin for us, *that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him.*

3. How far his being made Sin for us, did conduce to the making us righteous.

4. That his being for that Reaſon made Sin for us, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him is a very forcible Argument for our being reconciled to God. For after this manner are the words introduced, *ver.* 20. *We pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made*, &c.

Before I proceed to the Particulars propoſed, let me obſerve ſome things that are ſuppoſed.

As,

1. That by the Fall, Mankind was in a Condition that wanted Relief, that needed Pardon and Remiſſion.

2. That

2. That Mankind has all along supposed that there needed an Atonement, that is, somewhat over and above Repentance, as it is evident from Sacrifices. Sermon III.

3. That we are not to question whether God could remit Sin without an Atonement upon Repentance only: But to take it for granted, that he will not remit it without an Atonement.

4. That we are therefore to consider upon what Terms we are to have the Benefit of such Atonement, and by which we are taken into Covenant with God. These things premised, I shall return to the Particulars before recited.

As,

1. What Christ did when he was made Sin for us; that is (as I have shew'd) when he was made a *Sin-Offering*, as he is said to be sacrificed *for us*, 1 Cor. 5. 7. And accordingly the Text doth covertly point to the several Qualifications required in an expiatory Sacrifice, or a Sacrifice for Sin, and to which the Sufferings of Christ bear an exact Resemblance; which are such as these.

1. Designation. He hath *made* him to be sin, appointed him so to be; as those Sacrifices under the Law were of God's own immediate Institution. So it's

Sermon III.

elsewhere said of our Saviour, *Rom.* 3. 25. that God *sent him forth* προέθετο predetermined him, to be a Propitiation.

2. Substitution. It was *for us*, and in our stead. And so he is said to be wounded *for our trangressions*, &c. Isai. 53, 3, &c. to be a Propitiation for our Sins. 1 Joh. 2. 2.

3. Purity. He, *Who knew no Sin*, as the Sacrifice under Law, was to be without Spot. *Num.* 19. 2.

So 'tis said of our Saviour, *How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offer'd himself without Spot to God, Heb.* 9. 14. 1 *Pet.* 1. 19. *c.* 2. 21. *c.* 3. 18.

4. There is a farther Emphasis to be put upon the Person, he hath made *him* to be Sin; which doth denote the vast Difference between the legal Sacrifices, and that of Christ. So the Apostles, *Heb.* 9. 13. *For if the Blood of Bulls and Goats sanctifieth*, &c. *How much more shall the Blood of Christ purge*, &c. 1 *Pet.* 1. 1.

2. General. What was there in Christ's being made Sin for us that could be the Reason of making us righteous?

And that was that God might manifest his Justice and Holiness, his Hatred to Sin, and his Resolution to punish it; when

when he would pardon the Offender, and remit the Penalty upon no less valuable a Consideration, than the Blood of his own Son. So *Rom.* 3. 25. *Whom God hath set forth, to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his righteousness for the Remission of his Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*, ver. 26. Sermon III.

So Rom. 8. 3. God sending his *own* Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin (or by a Sacrifice for Sin) condemned Sin in the Flesh.

By this Means, as God hath testified his Mercy on the one hand, by admiting a Sacrifice; so his Justice and Holiness on the other, by requiring it, and that a Sacrifice of inestimable Value. 1 *Pet.* 1. 18, 19. *Forasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things.*

3. General. How far Christ's being made Sin, or a Sin-Offering for us doth conduce to the making us righteous.

There is no doubt but that the Sufferings of our blessed Saviour were so sufficient and perfect, so fully answering their end, and so suitable to the case they respected, that there needed nothing more of that kind to complete them; for *by one Offering hath he perfected for ever them that are sanctified*,

Sermon III.

ſanctified, Heb. 10. 14. So here, *ver.* 19. *God was in Chriſt reconciling the World to himſelf*; that is, there was now nothing wanting on God's part to teſtify his Reconciliation. But as there are two Parties concerned in the Covenant; the Perſon reconciling and the Perſon to be reconciled; the one forgiving and the other to be forgiven. So there is requiſite on our part, a certain capacity for Pardon and Reconciliation, as well as a diſpoſition on God's part to pardon; and therefore it follows, *ver.* 20. *Wherefore be ye reconciled unto God:* Whereas verſe 19. did ſhew how far God had proceeded, when he teſtified his good Will to Mankind, by appointing and accepting the Atonement; ſo verſe 20. is a limitation upon the former, and ſhews that there is an expectation of a Reconciliation on our part to complete it, and render us capable of that favour: For it follows, *Now then we are Embaſſadors from Chriſt, beſeeching you, &c. that ye be reconciled unto God.*

From whence it is evident, that as the vertue of Chriſt's death did make way for God's being reconciled to us, and that without any derogation to his Authority, Juſtice and Holineſs, he might receive Sinners

Sinners into his Favour. So it was upon the Condition of our being reconciled to him, that we ſhould be partakers of that favour, and without which reconciliation on our part, neither would Almighty God be actually and fully reconciled to us, nor could we be the Righteouſneſs of God in Chriſt. And therefore the ſufferings of Chriſt, how valuable and meritorious, how effectual and ſufficient ſoever they were in themſelves, yet they were never deſign'd to weaken God's Authority, to affront his Laws, or derogate from the perfections of his Nature, by reconciling him to ſuch as remain irreconcileable Enemies to him. Sermon III.

Chriſt is indeed ſaid to be a *propitiation for our Sins:* But as a Propitiation in the nature of it, doth declare God's love to Juſtice and his hatred to Sin, when he would not pardon it without a compenſation, and ſuch a compenſation as the Blood of his own Son: So it implies the Favour and Mercy thereby procured, and upon that conſideration promis'd to us, is in no other way to be obtained than what is conſiſtent with, and tends to the promoting the ſame ends: And that God that deſigned and appointed his beloved Son as a Propitiation, that he might

might with a salvo to his own Honour, Authority and Law, receive Sinners into favour, never design'd they should be so received in such a way as would utterly overthrow them. For if he might pardon Sinners, whether penitent or impenitent, and deal with them as righteous, whether they were wicked or righteous, this might have been done as well without a Propitiation as with it; and the shedding of the Blood of Christ, and the whole process of his Humiliation and Sufferings might have been spared. The honour of God's Justice, Authority and Holiness might have stood as safe, where there was no Propitiation as where there was. But if the doing right to these [*viz.* his Justice, Holiness and Authority] was the reason of a Propitiation, and of so valuable a Propitiation as the Blood of the only begotten Son of God, then the case is not alter'd by a Propitiaton; and impenitent Sinners can no more be pardoned upon a Propitiation than they could have been pardoned without it. And we may as well expect God should pardon us without any Atonement, as pardon us after an Atonement, when he must quit his Holiness, Justice and Authority for it. So that the Gospel-Terms of

Sermon III.

Faith,

Faith, Repentance, and new Obedience, are eſtabliſhed upon the ſame reaſon and neceſſity as a Propitiation. And we may as well expect God ſhould pardon us without any Propitiation, without any Atonement made on our behalf, as pardon us after that Atonement is made, without obliging us to the performance of the Conditions required in the New Covenant; which would leave us in the ſame confuſed State, as if God ſhould pardon us without a Propitiation. Sermon III.

Nay, ſo much the worſe would the caſe have been, as it may bear a Queſtion, Whether God could have pardoned (if he had ſo pleaſed) without a Propitiation? *Mic.* 7. 18. *Matth.* 6. 14. But it is impoſſible in the nature of the thing, to pardon us without Repentance on our part, and ſave us without our Converſion to himſelf.

Nay, ſo much the worſe is it now, that when there was ſuch a valuable conſideration as ſhould be a ſufficient *propitiation for the ſins of the whole World*, ſuch as refuſe the Goſpel-Terms do declare, that they value their Sins above the Blood of their Saviour, when they choſe to adhere and continue in them, after God has ſtamped ſuch a black and

and indelible Character upon them, by the Sacrifice he appointed and required for their Expiation, as the Blood of his own Son.

Sermon III.

Before therefore any can think to be pardoned for Christ's sake, without the Gospel-Qualifications of Faith, Repentance and Obedience, they must satisfy themselves, that Sin is not hateful to God; that to pardon it without Repentance is no derogation to the Perfections of his Nature: Nor is the end of Christ's death defeated, though they are not redeemed from *the power of their iniquities.* But if the contrary to this be true, as certainly it is, then the impenitent Sinner is in a very dangerous and unsalvable condition, and notwithstanding so valuable and meritorious a Sacrifice as that of Christ, such a one will be sent away with those to whom it shall be said at the last day, *I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity*, Mat. 7. 23. But if on the contrary, there be a true Faith in Christ, and a Repentance from dead Works, we are reconciled to God and God to us; we are one with him, and he with us.

And forasmuch as Christ was made a Sin-offering for us, we shall be made the Righteous-

Righteouſneſs of God in him; then whatever Sins we have before been guilty of, ſhall for his ſake be pardoned; and we ſhall at laſt *obtain eternal redemption by him*, Heb. 9. 12. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his life*, Rom. 5. 10. Sermon III.

To bring this point to a cloſe, let us put the caſe of a Sinner after this manner. Put the caſe that the Sinner be impenitent, and continues in that State living and dying, what can he hereafter plead for himſelf, why, as an obſtinate Sinner he ſhould not be proceeded againſt, and the ſentence of Condemnation paſs upon him? By what means is he ſecured or juſtified? What hath he to plead for himſelf, when he hath no Pardon, no Promiſe, no Expiation, no Saviour, to which he can be entitled; having not fulfilled the Conditions, nor complied with the Terms upon which alone thoſe are made over to him. His Mouth muſt be ſtop'd, and all his Arguments for Mercy before cloſed.

But now on the other ſide: Put the caſe that the penitent Sinner is impleaded; wherewith ſhall *he come before the*

the Lord, who is a God of infinite Pu-
Sermon rity, and ſo hates Sin, and of infinite
III. Juſtice to puniſh it? Here is the remedy for ſuch, here the Ground of his Comfort, here the Foundation of his Plea and what he is to depend upon; and that in the firſt place is a valuable Propitiation, the Blood of the Son of God, in vertue of which his Repentance is accepted and his Sins are pardoned.

The Sinner is then no Sinner in the Eye of the Evangelical Law and Conſtitution of the New Covenant, his Sins are forgiven, his Services and his Perſon accepted; and when the Sinner is reconciled to God, God is reconciled to him: And ſince Chriſt was made a Sin-offering for him, the Sinner is made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.

IV. General. Chriſt's being made a Sin-offering and a Sacrifice for us, that we might be *made the Righteouſneſs of God*, &c. is a powerful Argument for our being reconciled unto God.

This is a point that has peculiar Conſiderations to enforce it, taken from the Context. As

1. 'Tis *God reconciling* the Creator ſtooping to the Creature, to one that doth as well ſubſiſt as he was made by his Power.

2. It

2. It was God reconciling the *World*, the whole Race of *Adam*, the perverse Off-spring of a degenerate Parent. And that when we were yet *without strength*, while *Sinners* and *Enemies* (as the Apostle carries on the *Climax*, *Rom.* 5. 6, 8, 10.) *we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* Sermon III.

3. We are still led on: God was *in Christ* reconciling the World to himself, no meaner a Person than the Son of God, one no less dear to him than his only begotten Son, that was made a Sacrifice for us: When there are *thousand thousands minister to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*, Dan. 7. 10. When there were Cherubin and Seraphin that might have been employed, and were employed in proclaiming these glad Tidings of Reconciliation to the World, yet he sent his Son to accomplish it; He *spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all*, Rom. 8. 12.

4. *He made him to be Sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him, and that we might be received to favour, and be dealt with as if we never had offended.* And is not all this a sufficient, and should it not also prove an effectual Argument for our Reconciliation unto God? *Herein is love*, (saith the Apostle, 1 *John* 4. 10.) *not that we loved God,*

Sermon III.

but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins. And he might well conclude, as he doth verse 19. *We love him, because he first loved us.* For could there be more done to testify his Love to us, than to send his Son, and to send him to die for us, and be our propitiation? Could there be more done than to seek first to be reconciled? Can there be more done, than that the Creator should thus condescend to the Creature, the Offended to the Offender? Were we but duly sensible what Sin is, what it deserves; what it is that makes, and what it is to have Almighty God for our Enemy; how sollicitous should we be to obtain his Favour, and what would we not be willing to give for such an expedient as might purchase it? How should we be apt to say with them in the Prophet, *Micah 6. 6. Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the most High? will the Lord be pleas'd with thousands of Rams and ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl? Shall I give my first-born for my Transgression, and the fruit of my Body for the sin of my soul?* &c.

How readily should we then hearken to such a Proposal, how earnestly should we sue for it? How chearfully should we embrace it when offer'd? This would be

our

our case if we saw our danger, but had no prospect of a Remedy, and no Revelation of it. And is there not the same reason for our Reconciliation to God when God is reconciled, when there is a Promise and a Revelation, as if there was no Promise, no Proposal, no Revelation? And especially when the danger is still before us, and we may everlastingly perish, not through want of a Reconciliation in God, not through want of a Propitiation valuable and sufficient, but through want of our Reconciliation to him. Sermon III.

And this Argument will still be improved, if we consider how the Son of God was *made Sin for us*, and what he suffered to redeem us from it. The coming of Christ into the World was so infinite a Condescension, and his Life in it such a state of Humiliation, that nothing but the fervent desire he had of doing the greatest good to Mankind could induce him to it. He *had a glory with the Father before the World was*, John 17.5. and so all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them, could be no motive to him to quit those Mansions of Blessedness. What a condescension then was it for him not to have a House where to lay his Head? *Mat.* 8. 20. What to be treated as the worst of Criminals, and to be

Sermon III.

loaded with the heavieſt reproaches, to be buffeted, ſcourged, crucified? What was it for him to die, and ſuffer more than Man could inflict or Man could bear? What a death was that which made him as it drew near, to *ſweat* as it were great *drops of Blood*; and with *ſtrong crying and tears*, to beg *if it were poſſible, that Cup might paſs from him?* What a death was that which Nature trembled at, and that the whole frame of it ſeem'd to bear a part in? When the Heavens were covered with darkneſs, the Earth ſhook, the Rocks rent, the Graves were opened, and many of the bodies of Saints aroſe? *Mat.* 27. 51. What a death was that which made the Son of God himſelf to cry out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Mat. 27. 46. Good God! what muſt that be that drove his Soul into ſuch bitter Agonies, that thus afflicted him under the deſign of doing the greateſt good to Mankind, and a Service moſt acceptable to the Father? What could thus move him, him I ſay, in whom the moſt ſpotleſs Innocence, the moſt fixed Reſolution, the moſt invincible Patience, the moſt perfect Charity met together? What could thus ſhake the Powers of his Soul, and thus embitter the Cup which his Father gave him to drink? *John* 18. 11. Could it be death?

Luke 22. 44.

Heb. 5. 7. Mat. 26. 39.

death? How could that distress *him* that was *the Resurrection and the Life?* John 11. 25. Could it be the kind of Death, the Pain and the Shame of it? that even others have not only born with Patience, but triumph'd over in his Cause; and he is said to have *endured the Cross and despised the Shame*, Heb. 12. 2. But this it was to be *wounded for our Transgressions, to be bruised for our Iniquities*, and to be made Sin for us. And is not this a powerful and irresistible Argument for our Reconciliation to God? Did our Sins cost so much, and was it thought necessary by the Father that before they should be expiated, the Son of God should thus do, and thus suffer; that he should drink of such a bitter Cup, that he might *taste death for every Man*, Heb. 2. 9. And was he content to do it for so important a consideration, as the reconciling God to Man? And is it not then as fit, reasonable and necessary, that we should be reconciled to God through him? And can we think slightly of Sin, which God did thus condemn in the Flesh and Sufferings of Christ, and would not forgive under a less expiation than the Blood of his own Son? Can we then think with Reason or Safety to continue in that which he has thus branded as the object

Sermon III.

Isa. 53. 5.

of

of his higheſt Diſpleaſure? Wilt thou
Sermon then, Sinner, ſee what Sin is, how diſplea-
III. ſing to Almighty God? Follow Chriſt from the Cradle to the Grave, through all the Acts of his Abaſement and Humiliation; follow him more eſpecially from *Gethſemane* to *Calvary*, from the Garden to the Croſs; behold him ſweating, ſtriving, crying; behold him betrayed, bound, reproached, buffeted, ſcourged, and crucified; behold him in his Agonies, and earneſtly praying the terrible Cup might paſs from him; and at laſt crying out *my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?*

And then ſee if there was any *Sorrow like unto his*, Lam. 1. 12. or any Evil like unto Sin, that he thus ſuffered for. Canſt thou, Sinner, ſee all this, thy Saviour, the Son of God, thus ſuffering, and thus diſtreſſed, and not be deeply concerned and afflicted! Haſt thou no Trouble, no Compunction for his Agonies, no Tears of Repentance for his Drops of Blood, no Indignation againſt Sin, which he by this means made Expiation for? And after all wilt thou be as blind and infatuated, as inflexible and obſtinate as the deluded Jew that crucified him, that ravingly cried out, *His*
Mat. 27. 25. *Blood be on us and on our Children*; and, *not this Man, but Barabbas.*

What

What a Reproach was it to that People, that the Rocks were more yielding than they, that the Earth trembled, and the Sun hid its Head at what they gloried in; that the Heathens declared him to be *righteous*, whom they accuſed as a Malefactor; that a Thief believed in him, whom the Scribes and Rulers did reject! Sermon III.

And ſhall we be more unrelenting than they, and by our Infidelity and Diſobedience, our Obſtinacy, betray to ſcorn our Saviour and his Religion, and nail them as it were to his Croſs. Ceaſe at length, O impenitent Chriſtian, the Proſecution of thy bleſſed Saviour; triumph not over him in his Sufferings; trample not that ſacred Blood under thy Feet, by which if ever thou muſt be ſanctified, and thy Sins forgiven, and thou eternally ſaved; from this Day begin to love, admire and adore.

At length throw down thy Arms, and declare that thou art conquer'd by a mighty Love; by the Love of God, in thus ſending his Son, and by the Love of his Son, in thus dying for thee.

Turn all thy Diſpleaſure and Indignation againſt thy ſelf, or rather againſt thy moſt mortal Enèmies, the World, the Fleſh and the Devil, and call upon thy Saviour for his Aſſiſtance. Dedicate all the Powers of thy Soul to his Service, and

Sermon III.

~~~ say with our Victorious Apostle elsewhere, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, by whom I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me*, Gal. 6. 14. And since we are *bought* with such an inestimable *Price*, *let us glorify God with our Bodies and Souls which are his*, 1 Cor. 6. 20. For *to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the Dead and of the Living*, Rom. 14. 9. or as it is here, *God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation. Now then we are Ambassadors from Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

To whom with the Father and the Holy-Ghost be all Honour, Glory, Majesty, Power and Dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.
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